

THE
FAMOUS FAMILIES
BLACK DOUGLASES

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FAMOUS FAMILIES IN BRITISH
HISTORY

THE BLACK DOUGLASES

By D. C. STEDMAN

THOMAS NELSON
AND SONS

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TO
CHARLES ALEXANDER DOUGLAS
XIITH EARL OF HOME
LORD DOUGLAS
OF
DOUGLAS
WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S GRACIOUS PERMISSION
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED





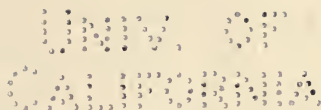
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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. The Bride of the Black Douglas . . .	9
II. The Douglas Larder . . .	16
III. Of Two Brave Hearts . . .	24
IV. The Flower of Chivalry . . .	33
V. Otterburn . . .	41
VI. Black Archibald . . .	50
VII. The Lord of War . . .	57
VIII. Catharine Douglas . . .	66
IX. Two Brave Boys . . .	75
X. The Great Soul of Earl William . . .	88
XI. Sovereign Power . . .	95
XII. The Day of Doom . . .	103
XIII. Marjorie Douglas . . .	110





THE BLACK DOUGLASES.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDE OF THE BLACK DOUGLAS.

“And I will woo her as the lion wooes
To bring his wild mate docile to his side,
And I will win her as the lion wins
That in the desert seeks his tawny bride.”

JULIAN STURGIS.

NEARLY twelve miles south-west of the good market town of Lanark, in the southern uplands of fair Scotland, there is a little gray village, with all its houses of slate-gray stone, the colour likewise of the rocks that arise in the meadow-land around, of the river which runs through its pleasant pastures and park, and of the mist that crowns the heads of the stately Cairntable Mountains to the west.

Gray is all the land, and fitting is it that it should be so; for in a gray tower in the park—near to the place where now stands a noble baronial

mansion—dwelt, more than six hundred years ago, the early lords of Douglas, whose name means “dark or black water.”

In a little chapel on the hill in the town now “sleep in dull cold marble” many of the great ones of the most warlike and most illustrious race of warriors the soil of Britain has ever fostered. A roofless, ivy-clad tower is all that remains of their earliest home, the nursery of the mighty line; the chapel still bears the name of their patron saint, St. Bride; and the stream running through the park lands of Douglas is called the Douglas Burn, whose banks have been the scene of such stirring adventures of strife and slaughter, of raid and romance, and of moonlit mystery, that if ever a stream were “fairy water,” it is surely the Douglas Burn.

To-day the town of Lanark is larger and wealthier than the little “burgh” of Douglas, but in that day the Lanark folk owed man-rent—that is, service in time of peace and war—to the Douglasses of Douglasdale.

Now the position of the Scottish nobles in the later years of the thirteenth century was a very difficult one. Many of them owned estates in Northumberland, on the southern side of the English marches or border. The Plantagenets ruled England at this time, and Edward the First was continually employed in planning how he could

by craft or conquest subject the northern land to the English crown.

Among the Scottish lords who, through the possession of English lands, owed fealty to King Edward as well as to their own king was William, called "Le Hardi," Lord of Douglasdale, who also held estates in six other Scottish shires and Warndon and Fawdon in Northumberland by gift and legacy of his father, Sir William Douglas, called "Long Leg."

Now one fine winter morning of 1288—it was very early, for the dawn had not yet come—a single man was pacing the banks of the Douglas Burn, his head sunk low, his hands clasped behind his back, his whole attitude indicating deep thought. When the day breaks we shall see more of him, and we must mark him well, for with him the clear dawn of history breaks upon the martial house of the Black Douglas, and upon the deeds, good and ill, which in its annals stand recorded.

Suddenly, with the thinning of the mist crowning the heads of the larger and lesser Cairntables, came the broad pink bars flushing the sky, shooting out rosy-hued fingers of light on the wild, bleak moorland country all around. The solitary man paused in his firm, soldierly stride and stood stock-still while the sunlight bathed in floods of brilliance his own castle towers, the gray burn at his feet, the roofs of Douglas, and the tower of St. Bride's Kirk in the little town.

Now we may see a long-limbed, dark man of remarkable height, angular and raw-boned, his military cloak falling loosely from his shoulders. The bend of his head reveals on his sinewy neck an immense scar of an old wound got from a sword-cut in his first fight while defending his father's house of Fawdon against the retainers of Gilbert de Umfraville, an English knight, then Earl of Angus.

Never had he been nearer to death than on that disastrous day, for the stroke had gone nigh to sever his head from his body. For the rest, William Douglas had the dark features of all his race, crisp, blue-black, wavy hair, and deep-brown eyes with a lion look in them. There was a singular likeness to the gait of that lord of beasts in his quick, padding strides and swift, sinuous motion.

At that moment he was thinking over a weighty matter. His first wife, Elizabeth Stewart, was dead, and the Douglas must, for the sake of his house, wed lands and riches. Lord William's second choice was a most beautiful lady, but she was a young widow and a ward of King Edward of England, who would surely exact the penalty. The prize was fair enough, but the risk was great indeed.

Lord Douglas blew a loud call on the hunting-horn hanging from his belt, and it was answered

The Bride of the Black Douglas. 13

instantly by a couple of his retainers, who came swift-foot over the meadow and saluted him.

He bade them speed to Baron Wishart, his brother-in-arms, who was in the plot and was bringing a troop to take part with him. Then he named as captain of his men Tom Dickson of Hazelside, the head of an old and valiant family very loyal to the house of Douglas; and even as Dickson drew up the Douglas warriors on the sward before the castle, there, beyond the river, over by the track skirting a small wood, a glint of steel played wavering about the shadows.

And now, defiling along the banks of the Douglas Burn, came the men of Baron Wishart. A brief salute, a sharp word of command, and merrily jingled the bridles as away rode the whole force. The lion had indeed gone forth to seek his bride.

* * * * *

In the good castle of Tranent, in East Lothian, that Christmastide the retainers, high and low, of the fair lady Eleanor de Zouch made right merry cheer, as was the wont of fighting men who held their lives in their hands. The lady herself sat among her bower-maidens waiting until her lovely namesake and co-heiress, Eleanor de Ferrers, should have ended her devotions in the castle's stately chapel.

There she knelt before the altar, her white

taper fingers held closely together, stiffly upraised, like a waxen figure or some carven saint. Her beaded rosary and crucifix hung from her neck, and ever and anon the fair head bent lower and lower upon her breast, while the white veil fluttered in the light evening breeze.

Eleanor de Ferrers mourned there in silence her late husband, Lord William. She had come north to Tranent to collect her rents, for King Edward had dealt generously with her on the death of his trusty liege, William of Groby.

And while now in the chapel the choir took up the song of praise and sang,

“Wassail for the kingly Stranger
Born and cradled in a manger!”

the war cloud on the southern horizon grew nearer and yet more near.

The men of Douglasdale crept stealthily over the moat bridge, left down by the careless keeper, and scattered swiftly into the enclosure. Then their fierce warcry, “Douglas! Douglas!” rang out in the frosty air, mingling with the singing; and there arose another dread song—the song of the sword as it meets a foeman’s blade. Cries of fear, fierce oaths of the men, shrill screams of the women-folk made a strange chorus, above which soared ever the shout of “Douglas!” It was all over in a few moments.

The Bride of the Black Douglas. 15

When William Douglas, ever thereafter known as "Le Hardi," turned his horse's head northward once more, there rode at his side the lovely girl heiress, Eleanor de Ferrers. And when he proposed that she should take him in place of the husband she had lost, her answer was not by any means unkind.

The English king was exceedingly wrathful at this daring act. He ordered the seizure of the estates of Douglas in Northumberland, and fined Lady Eleanor one hundred pounds.

Lord William Douglas suffered many changes of fortune thereafter. He was Governor of Berwick when King Edward sacked that town with such a fearful massacre on Good Friday, 1296. Douglas was then imprisoned there, and the Constable of Berwick reported later "that he remained still very savage and very abusive." This was the third time that he had been King Edward's prisoner, so it is small wonder that he showed some temper.

When the English retreated from Berwick in 1297 Douglas was transferred to the Tower of London, and died there soon afterwards. But he left a still greater warrior to follow in his footsteps.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOUGLAS LARDER.

"Therefore the men of that country,
For such things that there mingled were,
Called it 'the Douglas Larder.'"

BARBOUR (translated literally).

THAT gallant soldier and bold adventurer, Lord William le Hardi, left three sons—James, Hugh, and Archibald—of whom only James will concern us here.

Like so many of the sons of the feudal nobility, he was sent as a boy to be educated at the university of Paris. There he led a gay and rather reckless life, being in this way strangely like the great English monarch, Henry the Fifth. Each of them, after a wild youth, has left a famous name; each is held for ever among the honourable of the earth.

When young James heard of his father's mournful death in the Tower, and knew that he was now Lord Douglas, he sailed back to Scotland and made his way to St. Andrews, whereof the bishop at that time was one William Lamberton,



a staunch friend to his father, and indeed to all his house. The good man greeted him with much affection, and James made a low reverence.

"Father," said he, bowing beneath the blessing the bishop bestowed with uplifted fingers, "I am resolved to offer my homage to King Edward if he will grant me mine heritage."

"So be it, my fair son," answered Lamberton. "He will besiege Stirling shortly; then will we go to his camp."

King Edward's great following made a brave sight around the castle of Stirling on its terrace-circled hill. Bishop Lamberton led young Douglas straight to the royal pavilion.

"Sire," he said, "I bring you here this child who claims to be your man, and prays you by sweet Saint Charity that you will receive here his homage and grant him his heritage."

"What lands does he claim?" asked the king.

"Sire, if it be your pleasure, he claims the lordship of Douglas, for thereof his father was lord."

The fierce Plantagenet frown curved over the high-arched forehead of Edward. Striking his fist on the ivory table before him, he rose up and cried,—

"Surely, sir bishop, if thou wouldst keep thy fealty, thou wouldst use no such words as these to me. His father was ever my fell foe and was against my majesty, and he died for it in my

prison; therefore 'tis I that should be his heir. Let his son, then, go and get land wherever he may, for, my faith, he shall have none of these. The Clifford shall have them, for he hath ever served me loyally."

The good bishop was so daunted by the fierce manner of the king that he fled in haste from before his face. But young James Douglas looked full into the angry eyes blazing on him from the royal chair—ay, even until he reached the door of the pavilion.

We have a clear pen-portrait left for us of this the most famous of the Black Douglasses. It is drawn by John Barbour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, who was a boy of about ten years of age at his hero's death. He tells us that James Douglas was not strikingly handsome, being somewhat gray of face. He had black hair and was well made, great of bone and broad-shouldered, and lean despite his powerful build. When he was in a happy mood he was charming in manner, meek and sweet in company; but in the press of battle terrible to look upon. He had a way of lisping in speech which became him well.

But perhaps Barbour's description of Lord James's character is as precious an heirloom of the past as our literature possesses. All men, he tells us, loved him for his bounty. He was of noble bearing, wise, courteous, and jovial in manner,

liberal and affectionate; and, loyal in all deeds himself, above all things he loved loyalty. He condescended not to deal with treachery and falsehood, for his heart was set on high honour, and he bore him in such a way that all near his person loved him. And such deeds he wrought in his life-day that the memory of "the Good Sir James" is lovingly cherished to the south as well as to the north of the Tweed.

Perhaps if King Edward had foreseen how formidable a foe to England he was to raise up by his harshness, he would have given up the lands of Douglasdale to their lawful lord. For the valour of this the greatest of the Plantagenets was always tempered by his surpassing wisdom. But it was not to be, and it was well indeed for the illustrious house of Douglas, since the great deeds to which patriotism and family pride inspired James Douglas are among the most brilliant in its glorious annals.

Soon after this Robert Bruce slew John Comyn in the Grey Friars' Church of Dumfries, and then began the Bruce's terrible struggle to free Scotland from the yoke of England. Douglas flung in his lot with the northern patriots. Bishop Lamberton gave him his palfrey, iron-gray Ferrand, bidding him take him despite the groom, for of course it would have gone ill with Lamberton had King Edward known of his aiding Douglas in joining the Bruce. The groom opposed the

young nobleman, who made short work of him, cutting the churl down with his sword. He then joined Robert at the Eric Stone, near Lochmaben, at the head of Annandale. There one of the most famous and enduring of friendships had its birth—that of Scotland's patriot king and his greatest soldier and general.

It was not long after the seemingly hopeless struggle with England began that young Douglas sought and obtained, though hardly, Bruce's permission to see how things went in Douglasdale, whereof Lord Clifford had appointed a governor who lived as seneschal of Douglas Castle.

With two yeomen only Lord James passed the confines of his own heritage. He knew well—none better—that he might not war openly against the English. Therefore he thought to work with cunning against them.

By the great hearth in the grange of Hazelside sat Thomas Dickson, an old retainer and a loyal one of William, Lord of Douglas. Quite still he sat, never moving, save now and again to glance over the river in the direction of Douglas Castle, from the topmost tower whereof flew the white cross of St. George. As the shades of evening deepened the old man's brow darkened, and ever and anon his massive hand fingered restlessly the long shaft of a great Jedwood axe which lay across his knees.

A tall shadow fell across the threshold, and he started up fiercely, but sat down again as a stalwart young man entered, casting a fawn from his shoulders. The old man still maintained silence, and his son began to make ready the evening meal.

A cautious rapping at the door disturbed them.

"The Southrons," growled young Dickson.

"Nay," answered the old man; "what need they of such careful approach?"

He passed swiftly to the door and drew the pin, stepping back in amazement as a lithe-limbed, dark-featured young man slipped past him into the room and stepped into the yellow light shed on the floor by the cresset on the wall. It needed but one glance, however, and the two yeomen were on their knees beneath the outstretched hand of their young lord.

"The time we spake of is at hand," he said. "Give the signal."

Young Dickson strode to the door, and the loud hoot of the howlet, or owl, rang out in the crisp March air. It was answered from all sides, and in a few minutes the room was filled with stalwart men, natives of the Upper Ward, liegemen of the house of Douglas. Then they all, and old Thomas Dickson first of them, took the oath of fealty to the Douglas.

"Listen, my friends," said the young lord in

quiet, determined tones. "Palm Sunday is close at hand now. What of the garrison?"

"The Southron will march them to the kirk, my lord," said old Dickson eagerly.

"We will also attend service," said James Douglas grimly. "Till then disperse yourselves, but let no man fail by ten of the clock at St. Bride's."

In slow and stately marching order the English garrison, to the number of about thirty, filed into the kirk of St. Bride on the following Sunday. Each man, as became the festival, held a palm branch before him; but nevertheless each was armed from head to foot. A crowd of threshers gathered on the hill watched them idly as they paraded. A tall young man carrying a flail showed marked interest in the soldiery of England.

Suddenly a loud and terrible cry that for long had been silent in the gray dale resounded through the aisles of the kirk. Fierce old Dickson rushed in, but the cry of "Douglas! Douglas!" had been too early given, and the old warrior found himself keeping the door alone against the English. He fell, cut clean through the middle by an English sword; but so well did his master bear himself that all the Scots were heartened, and soon none of the English thirty remained, save some half-score of captives. At the castle Douglas found open entry, and

“Entered, and the porter took,
Right at the gate, and then the cook.”

After which, with his men, he sat down calmly to the good cheer prepared for the vanquished foe. But the heart of James Douglas secretly sorrowed for his old retainer, brave Tom Dickson.

“Take all we can carry, then to the cellar with the rest of the wheat, flour, meal, and malt. Mix it well on the floor, stave in the casks of drink, and let it run thereon. Foul the well with dead horses.”

“What of the prisoners, Douglas?” asked young Dickson.

“Off with their heads, Tom, on the heap to crown all. Clifford shall call this the Douglas Larder. Fire the castle!”

And this is the grim story of the famous Douglas Larder of March 19, 1307.

CHAPTER III.
OF TWO BRAVE HEARTS.

"I know thy name full well, Lord James,
And honoured may I be,
That those who fought beside the Bruce
Should fight this day for me !

"Take thou the leading of the van,
And charge the Moors amain ;
There is not such a lance as thine
In all the host of Spain !"

AYTOUN.

THE "Douglas Larder" took place on the first of several occasions on which the Black Douglas beset his ancient home ; and whenever he could be spared from Robert Bruce's side he was back in Douglasdale, appearing and disappearing so often and so mysteriously that the English garrisons soon began to credit him with magical powers.

This belief crossed the Border, and the name of "the Good Sir James, the dreadful Blacke Douglas," soon became associated with what was called the black art, and hence with the master of all black art, Satan himself.

But in reality it was his terrible appearance and marvellous victories on the field of battle that earned him this reputation. He fought in no less than seventy battles against the English, and of these he was victor in fifty-seven. What wonder, then, if the English grew to fear him, and even to frighten their children with his dreaded name?

Now when Lord Clifford heard of his losses at Douglas he was sorely grieved, and so came into Douglasdale with a great following and caused the castle to be rebuilt. He then made John de Thirlwall its captain, and departed into England. But the Lord James was still skirmishing about the fastnesses of the Cairntables, and he caused some of his men to drive off some cattle grazing near the castle. Thirlwall issued forth with his garrison, and pursued fiercely right into the ambush Douglas had prepared for him.

Then once more arose the fierce cry of "Douglas! Douglas!" Some of the English fled, but others made a stout resistance. However, in the end Thirlwall himself and most of his men were slain. James of Douglas seized all he could find about the castle, and then withdrew.

And now I come to the most romantic of these fights around

"The adventurous Castle of Douglas,
That to keep so perilous was."

A lovely English girl, Sir Walter Scott's Augusta de Berkely, who probably lived within the domains of Lord Clifford, was beloved by Sir John Walton. When he approached her—like fair Cunigonde who threw her glove among the lions and bade her lover fetch it—she answered,—

“When you have shown yourself a good bachelor by governing Douglas Castle fairly in all ways for a year, you may well ask a lady's favours.”

So Sir John de Walton, nothing daunted—though indeed he was thus brought into the danger of a more terrible adversary than many lions, to wit, the Black Douglas—asked Lord Clifford to make him warden of Douglas Castle.

This request was readily granted, for, as you can well believe, there were not many knights eager for the post.

That great soldier and skilful statesman, King Edward the First, died in June of this year—1307—nearly a month after Robert Bruce had, with a vastly inferior force, defeated Sir Aymer de Valence, the English king's lieutenant in Scotland, at Loudon Hill. Robert now marched northward, but he left his famous chieftain, James of Douglas, in the Lowlands.

It was about the time of the annual fair of Lanark town, which, as we have said, lies nearly twelve miles north-east of Douglas, that Lord

James led his men into his native dale again. Then once more he laid an ambush, or "train" as it was called, against the castle of his ancestors.

Sir John Walton, a lusty young knight, full of life and vigour, and very handsome, leaned idly against the stonework of Harries Tower in Douglas Castle, and let his eye rove over the surrounding landscape. At first he contemplated it with some anxiety, for provisions were running very short in the castle; but gradually other and pleasanter thoughts won sway over his mind as he reflected that much of his year of trial had now gone as a dream of the night when the dawn approaches.

Was there not indeed, even now, in his purse a letter from the lady of his heart, full of fair promises of favours to come? What might he not hope could he but keep the Black Douglas outside the gates of this devil's stronghold a few months more? And as the thought of his dire, invisible foeman crossed his mind, he dropped suddenly out of his dream-world, and into the stern, practical one of daily life. For a number of black figures were visible, at no great distance, proceeding towards Lanark town.

Now James of Douglas had caused some of his men to disguise themselves as peasants, and to carry sacks filled with grass upon their backs. These Sir John de Walton took to be loads of corn to be sold at Lanark Fair.

“Issue forth, my men,” he cried, “and take for me all that victual.”

So the garrison followed hotly on the track of the peasants. But when these men knew that Lord Douglas with the rest of his men lay between their pursuers and the castle, they cast off their gowns, sprang upon their horses, and charged. At the same time James Douglas came from his ambush and attacked the English in the rear. They were too astonished to fight well save Sir John de Walton, who, we may believe, made a desperate resistance. He was slain, and not a single one of his force escaped.

Thus once more Lord James captured his own home, but this time he dealt very gently with his prisoners. He sent them all back to Clifford with money in their wallets, and then destroyed the castle and again took to the forest, remarking as he went,—

“It is better to hear the lark sing than the mouse cheep.”

After the battle of Loudon Hill and the third capture of Douglas Castle, the fortunes of King Robert the Bruce were greatly improved. The death of the greatest of the Plantagenet line, Edward the First, left on the English throne his weak-minded son, Edward the Second, who did not pursue the war with any vigour. But when the only Scottish castles that remained in English

hands were Berwick, Stirling, and Bothwell, and King Robert's gallant brother, Edward Bruce, was besieging Stirling, the English king judged that it was time to make a supreme effort.

Sir Philip de Mowbray, the governor of Stirling, had asked Edward Bruce to cease fighting, promising on his own part to surrender the castle if no help came to him from England by mid-summer day of the year 1314. King Robert was very angry when he heard that his brother had consented to this; but in the days of chivalry such an agreement had to be adhered to, whatever the cost to either side.

So northward came the English host, some twenty to thirty thousand strong, of which number three or four thousand were cavalry. Against such a force King Robert could but oppose some seven thousand men in all, and he had only five hundred horse. But he was a very skilful general, and he laid his plans for the battle with wonderful prudence, choosing his position so well that the great advantage the English had in numbers was almost counterbalanced.

Then on June 24 was fought the famous battle of Bannockburn. James of Douglas and Walter the Steward, who afterwards married Bruce's only child, Marjorie, and became the ancestor of the house of Stewart, were in command of the left wing of the Scottish host, and each

of them on the morning of the battle day received the honour of "knight-banneret" from the king's hand. This meant that the swallow-tails of the pennons of their lances were rent off, leaving a square banner; and while the knight often rode in the following of some noble, the banneret always led his own. It was a very great honour, which could only be given on the field of battle itself.

The battle of Bannockburn was one of the most disastrous defeats an English army ever suffered. It secured the freedom of Scotland, and as the English border was quite undefended after this fight, James of Douglas led many a troop of light horse on successful raids into England.

The good Robert Bruce lived fifteen years after this great battle; but the hardships he had undergone during the time he was a mere fugitive, chased all over the land by King Edward's men, so shortened his life that he found it impossible to fulfil one of his dearest wishes—to undertake an expedition to the Holy Land as a Crusader. This, he thought, would have atoned for the blood that had been spilled in his cause during his life.

So when he lay dying at Cardross he sent for his chief barons, and bade them choose out the one of them most worthy to convey his heart to the Holy Sepulchre, to save his vow. At once their choice fell on James of Douglas.

Then said King Robert, "I am well pleased that you have chosen him. Let us now see what he says to it."

And Lord James Douglas knelt to the king.

"I give you great thanks, lord, for so many favours you have granted me since first I came into your service ; but over all things am I grateful that you should give into my charge your heart, that was illumined with all bounty and worth. For your sake, sire, I will gladly make this journey, if God will grant me space and leisure to live so long."

The king thanked him tenderly, and the whole company wept, so affecting was the scene.

When King Robert was dead, the Douglas had his heart set in a case of fine silver, and having arranged for the care of his own lands, set off on his perilous voyage. With a fine company he embarked at Montrose, and remained for twelve days at Sluys to give other Crusaders an opportunity of joining his force. He then sailed to Seville.

King Alphonso of Castile was then in the field against the Moors of Granada ; so Douglas, who had before resolved to take part in this war, which being against Saracens was esteemed a holy war, rode to the Spanish camp on the frontier of Andalusia. He was warmly welcomed, especially by the English knights, who, among

cavaliers from all over Europe, had taken up the Christian cause. One old fighter among them, whose face was seamed with countless scars, expressed a strong desire to see the famous Black Douglas, and when introduced to him was astonished to see that his face was unmarked. "Praise God," answered Douglas quietly, "I always had hands to guard my head."

He was given command of the vanguard, the post of honour ; but, mistaking an order to advance for a general attack, hurled his little squadron into the heart of the Moorish army. There they were completely surrounded. With the heart of Bruce hung around his neck, and fighting like a lion, Douglas could have escaped even then ; but he saw a dear comrade, Sir William de St. Clair, dismounted, and in deadly peril. Into the press again he rode, and fell there, above the heart of the master he had loved so well.

When the tide of battle rolled away and the Moors were scattered, his sorrowing comrades bore the heart of Scotland's greatest king and the bones of her most distinguished warrior back again to her kindly earth. The good Sir James was buried in his own church of St. Bride at Douglas, and a magnificent monument was erected over his grave by his son, Archibald the Grim, Lord of Galloway.





CHAPTER IV.

THE FLOWER OF CHIVALRY.

“ And there the dying lamps did burn
Before thy low and lonely urn,
O gallant chief of Otterburne !
And thine, dark Knight of Liddesdale !
O fading honours of the dead !
O high ambition, lowly laid ! ”

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

SIR JAMES OF DOUGLAS, “ the Good,” left two sons—William, who succeeded him as Lord of Douglas ; and Archibald, who many years afterwards became third earl, and under whom Galloway passed to the house of Douglas. Lord James also left a younger brother, Archibald, who, the year after the death of Randolph, Earl of Moray, Bruce’s second greatest soldier, became Regent of Scotland.

Like his distinguished brother, Lord Archibald Douglas was a very brave soldier. But in another way he was as unlike “ the Good Sir James ” as possible. For whereas Bruce’s faithful friend

fought in no less than seventy battles, and was victor in fifty-seven of them, Archibald Douglas was so unlucky as a general that he won the name of "Tineman"—that is, loser.

Now very soon after the death of King Robert the Bruce and his great leaders, Douglas and Randolph, war broke out with England again. King David, who had succeeded his father, was only a little boy six years old, and Scotland had to be ruled by a regent—that is, by one who rules for the king.

Edward the Third of England was a man of war like his grandfather, and he soon appeared in Scotland as the champion of Edward Baliol, son of John Baliol, an old rival of the eldest Bruce for the Scottish throne; and in May 1333 they laid siege to Berwick, which was garrisoned for King David by Sir Alexander de Seton.

Archibald Douglas thereupon raised an army and marched to relieve the garrison. There was an agreement between King Edward and Sir Alexander that the town should surrender unless help came by a certain day, and the governor handed over his son to the English king in pledge of his good faith. Now Douglas found but little difficulty in getting men and provisions passed within the walls, and then he marched away and wasted the Border.

King Edward summoned the garrison to sur-

render, but Sir Alexander considered with much reason that the town had been relieved. The English monarch replied by hanging young Seton under the walls, and the leaders then made a fresh treaty. The town was to surrender unless relief should arrive within a fortnight. Swift messengers were sent after the Tineman, who had with him young William, Lord of Douglas, Sir James's elder son, and a very fine army.

But meanwhile the English king, who knew well that they would return, was able to take up a very strong position on the slopes of Halidon Hill to the north-west of Berwick, and a marsh lay between his army and that of Douglas. King Robert Bruce, or the Tineman's renowned brother, Lord James, would have used this to his own advantage ; but Archibald Douglas made a terrible mistake. He decided to attack the English, and gave the order to cross the marsh in the teeth of the storms of arrows let loose on his columns by the English bowmen, the most formidable fighters the Middle Ages produced. The slaughter was fearful. William, Lord of Douglas, and six Scottish earls fell ; and last but not least, the brave Tineman himself atoned for his error like a gallant soldier—with his life. Berwick became, and remained, an English town. And it seemed indeed as if all the splendid work of the Black Douglas and his king was to go for nought ; for

David Bruce had to flee into exile, and, for the time at least, Baliol, or rather King Edward, was supreme.

Next year a great part of the Lowlands was surrendered to England, and gray Douglasdale, which "the Good Sir James" had held so well, was again granted to Lord Clifford's grandson.

But it has been said that "if one Douglas fall in the breach, there stands ever a better behind him," and so it proved in this case.

Archibald Douglas had a son, William, who, like his uncle, "the Good Sir James," was then being educated in France. He was a ward of his godfather, another William Douglas, afterwards known as the "Knight of Liddesdale," who watched right closely those ancestral domains of the Douglasses of Douglasdale. He had been appointed Warden of the Marches when Lord James departed for Palestine.

The Knight of Liddesdale was one of King David's most formidable champions, and he is the most famous of the royalists who opposed King Edward of England in his attempt to set Baliol on the Scottish throne.

In March 1333 Sir Anthony de Lucy made a raid into Annandale on behalf of Baliol. He passed through the fair country, burning and plundering as he went, until he came near to the beautiful lake of Lochmaben, Gazing across

its silver waters, you would never dream that a castle could be concealed there. But so it is, and the now ruined castle of Lochmaben was then one of the oldest of Bruce's fortresses.

Sir Anthony de Lucy knew this right well ; nor did he expect to pass it without trouble, so his scouts were ordered to keep a sharp look-out. And well was that for him, for as he neared the head of the ancient lane that skirts the lake on its eastern side the Knight of Liddesdale, with Sir Humphrey de Jardine and other royalist cavalry, clattered down it with pennons flying, and attacked the English furiously. They meant to take the column in flank ; but Sir Anthony was ready, and wheeled his force about, so that it choked up the mouth of the lane.

There was a furious fight, Sir Anthony was himself twice wounded, but victory declared for England. The Knight of Liddesdale was taken, and King Edward ordered him to be imprisoned in Carlisle. So it came about that he did not share in the rout of Halidon Hill, in July of the same year.

When released from prison, in 1335, he at once began his task of clearing the Lowlands of the English. Like "the Good Sir James," he would retire to the forest land when hard pressed, and, darting forth when least expected, deal some sudden and severe blow at his enemies. The

forest of Jedburgh was his centre, and his chief stronghold was

“The dusky vale
Of Hermitage in Liddesdale,
Its dungeons and its towers”

—that is, the castle of Hermitage, a few miles from the English border.

In this way “the Knight” won back all Teviotdale for his country except the fortress of Roxburgh; for that stronghold, together with Edinburgh, Jedburgh, and Lochmaben, remained English. These exploits earned for him the fair title of “the Flower of Chivalry.”

Edinburgh Castle, “standing in midst of the land,” as an old chronicler hath it, and garrisoned by the English, caused great annoyance to the royalist party, and William Douglas resolved to hazard an attack upon it. Now the castle, from its position on the summit of a hill more than four hundred and forty feet above sea-level, was at all times a difficult stronghold to attack; but the Knight’s fertile brain suggested a scheme. He bribed a sea captain named Will or Wat Curry to take a party of warriors to Inchkeith.

Curry offered to sell his cargo of excellent wines and corn to the English governor, Sir Richard de Limoisin, and soon the casks, filled with sand or salt water, were being drawn up the castle hill. The portcullis was raised, but,

somehow or other, could not be lowered again, for the careless Scots wagoner had got his team jammed beneath it !

Then ringing up the hillside came the dread war-cry, "A Douglas ! a Douglas !" The "Flower of Chivalry," with a well-armed force, was within the castle itself, and Sir Richard knew himself tricked. At the head of his men he made a savage resistance, but none could withstand the brilliant charge of the Knight. He swept away the guard at the gate and won the castle for King David, who was able to return from France next year, to find his kingdom almost clear of the English foes. But these splendid feats of arms performed by Douglas of Liddesdale were almost paralyzed by King David's rashness in his English expedition of 1346. At Neville's Cross he was utterly defeated by Henry Percy and captured by John Copeland, while the Knight also remained a prisoner.

Six years later he returned once more to his own domains, to find some one who considered his own right as better there than even that of Liddesdale himself. This was young William, Lord of Douglas, the Tineman's second son, afterwards first of the nine earls of the Black Douglas house. In Ettrick Forest they met at a spot called Galsewood, now William-hope. The Knight was furious at finding himself second, even to his own

overlord, in these lands for which he had fought so long, while his young chief had many a score to settle with the Knight as to where and how he had obtained lands over which he, as the Douglas, had supreme right.

Enough, William Douglas set lance in rest against William Douglas, godfather against godson—the Lord of Douglas had more men with him—and there fell the Flower of Chivalry, that scourge of the English, the Knight of Liddesdale.

CHAPTER V.

OTTERBURN.

"It fell about the Lammastide,
When the muir-men win their hay,
The doughty Douglas boun' him ride
Into England to drive a prey."

BORDER MINSTRELSY.

LORD WILLIAM succeeded to all the estates of the Tineman and Liddesdale. He was created *Earl* of Douglas in 1358, the first Douglas earl. Besides this, through his marriage with Margaret of Mar, heiress of the Earl of Mar, he became twice an earl, so that his full title was Earl of Douglas and Mar. He was a good warrior and a clever statesman, and, with Archibald "the Grim," another member of his house, bore his lance bravely for France in the terrible defeat of Poitiers in 1356, where, as at Crécy, ten years before, the English longbowmen utterly destroyed the French chivalry.

Sir John Froissart, the historian, journeying through Scotland about this time, was the guest of

the first Earl of Douglas at Dalkeith. "At that time Earl James was very young, though a promising youth ; he had also a sister named Blanche ;" and again, "There were only two children," he tells us, "a boy and a girl." But he lived to see both the beginning and the end of that boy's brief and glorious life. For James, second Earl of Douglas, who inherited the title in 1384, has won a name second to none in honour, save to that of "the Good Sir James," the Bruce's trusty friend.

In 1387 affairs in England seemed to promise well for one of those dashing Border forays so dear to the hearts of the chivalric chieftains of either country. In England

"Edward the Prince is underneath the ground,
Edward the King is dead ; at Westminster
The carvers smooth the curls of his long beard,"

and the council of young King Richard, the Black Prince's son, had advised the dismissal of Lord Neville, the warden of the Scottish Marches, and the appointment to the wardenship of the famous Percies of Northumberland, represented at this time by the Earl Henry and his sons, Sir Henry, the renowned "Hotspur," and Sir Ralph. This caused much bitter feeling between the two great families of Neville and Percy.

So the chief lords of Scotland took counsel to meet at Aberdeen. There they named a day early

in the August of 1388 for a great muster at Jedworth, on the Cumberland border.

Thither came the noblest of the kingdom, and, first of them all, James, Earl of Douglas. With him was Sir Archibald Douglas, a son of "the Good Sir James"—called by the English "Black Archibald the Grim," seemingly because he had inherited his father's terrible countenance in battle—the Earls of Moray, March, Fife, and Sutherland, and

" . . . the Gordons and the Graemes,
With them the Lindesays, light and gay."

In counsel together they resolved to make merry riding in England with a force of nearly forty-two thousand men.

But along with that brilliant company there entered the church of Yetholm, where they met, one who came as a servant following his master, and yet his heels were spurred. Percy's spy, for such he was, thus heard the plans of the Scots; but when he came out of the church, he found that his horse had been stolen. His appearance, that of a man booted and spurred trying to creep away on foot, aroused suspicion, and he was brought before Earl Douglas.

"Answer all my questions truly, fellow," said Earl James, "for, by St. Bride, if thou falter, I will strike off thy head. Who art thou?"

"I have been sent by the Earl of Northumberland to learn your numbers and the course of your march."

"And where are now the barons of Northumberland? Do they think to raid us?"

"Not so; when I left Newcastle there were no signs of an excursion, but—"

"Out with it, man!" shouted the young lord, clutching at his sword hilt.

"They are ready for a counter-raid, once you are entered into England. They will not fight because of your strength."

"How many spears do they think we number?" interposed Moray.

"Some twelve hundred, with forty thousand men, my lord," answered the English squire. "They will wait to see whether you follow the Carlisle route or that by Berwick to Newcastle, and then march by whichever road you leave open."

Then the Scottish lords looked at each other in silence. The Earl of Douglas called a council of his oldest and wisest chieftains, and bade them determine on what course to follow.

Then said Sir Archibald Douglas, "We had best divide our forces. Let the greater number continue the march through Cumberland, while a flying column rides with all speed for Newcastle and Durham. Before the foe can learn its whereabouts much mischief will be done; and if they

follow, we can unite forces and give them battle. It is high time to repay England the losses we have lately borne. I take it we all want a good fight for honour's sake ; is it not so, gentlemen ? ”

“ And I will lead the flying column,” quoth the Earl of Douglas.

There was a rasping clash as the blade of each man in that council of Scotland's best warriors swished through the air, which was rent, too, by the wild shout, “ A Douglas ! a Douglas ! ”

The Earl James could have had any number of recruits for his column, but as it was thought that the English would most certainly watch the western border more closely, and in order to increase the speed of his march, he decided to limit his own force to three hundred of the best knights and some two thousand mounted spearmen. The leaders under him were the Earls of Moray and March.

So after a simple, heartfelt farewell the chiefs separated, the great army to the west, the lighter force eastward with all speed across the Tyne into Durham, and thence to return by way of Newcastle. And all this without any consultation with King Robert the Second ! We see now how the house of Douglas began to take national affairs into its own control.

The flying column laid Durham waste as far as the gates of the city, then, wheeling swiftly about, halted before Newcastle. The attack made

on the town could not have been serious, and so weak a force could never have carried it by storm. But such a fair chance of winning honour was not to be missed, and there was much tilting at the barriers.

Earl James, on a splendid white Arab, rode along the glittering line of his knights. Right up to the barriers he rode, and raised his hand on high.

"My Lord Henry Percy, I defy you," he cried, and hurled his steel gauntlet to the ground.

The English ranks parted, and, quick as thought, a young warrior cased in steel, who sat his horse so perfectly that it seemed as though man and beast were one, and who appeared to be consumed with a fiery impatience and longing for the battle, dashed into the plain. This was Harry Percy, the fiercest of foes to the Scots, known as Hotspur from his red-hot eagerness for battle. Earl James held his helmet in his hand, the long white plume the Douglas earls always wore trailing nearly to the ground, and he bowed courteously as young Percy, reining up, uncovered his own head.

"Lord Douglas!" he cried, and burning to encounter so famous a foeman, laid lance in rest. A stern hush prevailed in the opposing battle lines.

The clanging impact of the armour plate rang through the air as the knights met. When the dust cloud had settled a mighty shout rose from the Scottish line, for Percy lay stretched on the sward.

Stooping low in the saddle, the Douglas plucked away his pennon, which bore the blue lion of the Percies, bordered with pearls.

“This shall flaunt gaily on my castle walls, a fit token of thy valour.”

“Never shalt thou cross the Border alive with that,” swore the Percy, making desperate efforts to recover his pennon.

“Come then, seek it before my tent,” cried Douglas, as the friends of the young English lord bore him forcibly within the gates of Newcastle.

Now when, the next morning, Douglas broke up his camp to march northward once more, his real weakness in numbers could no longer be hid, and Hotspur eagerly prepared to follow; nor would he wait until the arrival of the Bishop of Durham, who was expected soon with a force of seven thousand men.

On his return march the Earl of Douglas beset and stormed the tower of Ponteland. He burnt it to the ground, and some twenty-five miles farther north attacked the tower of Otterburn. Now this tower stood in a strong position among marshes, and the Scots spent a toilsome day assaulting it.

That night, August 12, 1388, the Earl of Douglas, who was determined to give Hotspur every chance of regaining his lost pennon, chose his camp with a forethought worthy of his great namesake and ancestor, Lord James “the Good.”

The main body, the nobles, knights, and men-at-arms, were in a wood to baffle the archers, while the camp followers and servants were entrenched on the slope of the hill of Otterburn. Expecting an attack from Hotspur, Earl James had already laid his plans, when, well on in the evening, the English fell on the servants' camp, and, after a fierce struggle, stormed it.

But meanwhile the Douglas had gained time, and now led the flower of his men around the hill of Otterburn. They fell on the English flank, driving it in; but there were four to one against them, and by sheer weight of numbers the Scots were pressed back.

The field resounded with the war-cries of "Espérance, Percy!" and "Douglas! Douglas!" Very nigh was the Percy to capturing his rival's banner, but Sir Patrick Hepburn and his son defended it most gallantly.

Then Earl James, perceiving his men begin to give way, seized a great battle-axe and hurled himself into the thick of the English battle, dealing such dreadful strokes that none might live beneath them. So once again the battle wave, through the might of one arm and the valour of one great heart, rolled away from the camp and down the Otterburn Hill.

But though the night was moonlit, the light was uncertain, and the gallant young earl suddenly

received three spear wounds all at once. As he fell a battle-axe drove in his helm, and the ranks of war rolled over him. A great man, his chaplain, Sir William of North Berwick, bestrid him, and, fighting with desperate valour, was able to cover his fall. But when Sir James Lindsay, Sir John and Sir Walter Sinclair came up, they found the chief in right evil case.

“How fares it with thee, cousin ?” asked James Sinclair.

“But so-so ; yet, God be thanked, few of us have died in our beds. This day shall be fulfilled that old prophecy that a dead Douglas shall win a field. Conceal my death, raise my banner, and shout my name.”

“Douglas ! Douglas !” they cried fiercely, and the Scots rallied to the cry. For the last time the tide of fight rolled away, far from the spot where lay the gallant earl. Sir Ralph Percy was captured by Sir John Maxwell, Hotspur himself had to yield up his sword to Lord Montgomery. The battle of Otterburn, “the hardest and most obstinate battle that was ever fought,” according to Froissart, who heard the details from men of both parties, had been won by the Scots.

And the last sound that rang in the ear of the Douglas was his own victorious name, borne on the breeze of battle.

CHAPTER VI.

“BLACK ARCHIBALD.”

“The quality of mercy is not strained—
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath : it is twice blest ;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes :
’Tis mightiest in the mightiest.”

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Earl James had been laid in honour in Melrose Abbey, “Black Archibald the Grim” succeeded to the vast estates and power of the Earl of Douglas. Years before, in 1369, he had been created Lord of Galloway by King David, and now it is that Galloway becomes inseparable from the history of the chiefs of Douglas. Let us try to see how this came about.

The thriving modern town of Castle Douglas runs on the west through the ancient burgh of Carlingwark. Some two miles farther along the road to Kirkcudbright an ancient track leads through the farmlands of Kelton. Follow it to the farm gates and there before you, on an island of twenty acres in the Dee, towers up in seventy feet of solid

masonry an enormous castle keep. Built by Black Archibald about 1373 as a sign of his sway in Galloway, the Thrieve was thenceforth the chief military strength of the Earls of Douglas, and plays a part second to none of their many fortresses in the days of strife that were to be.

This island stronghold must in those days have been practically impregnable. Surrounded by the swift-flowing Dee, the island itself was circled by a stone wall, behind which at some distance were mounds crowned with palisades to shelter archers, crossbowmen, and fusiliers. On three sides the castle was surrounded by an artificial moat, on the fourth—the west—it was built right on the brink of the Dee. Even were the moat passed, a strong wall, honeycombed with archer-slots and with a flanking tower at each angle, runs round the keep, the walls of which are nine feet in thickness of freestone and moorstone, strongly cemented with shell lime. To crown all, a foeman fortunate enough to find himself within the castle yard would discover that the portcullis of the keep was not on the sward but fourteen feet up, on the garrison floor.

Black Archibald the Grim, like several of his ancestors, made a marriage alliance which added considerably to his great wealth and power. Sir Thomas Moray, Lord of Bothwell, died between 1361 and 1366. The fair heiress to his broad lands was

named Joanna, and the Grim Douglas, like Lord William "le Hardi," had chosen his bride, and marked her for his own. So also had five knights of England, and as the choice of all lighted on the same lady, Douglas sent his cartel or letter of defiance to all five, proposing to meet them in single combat. The sweeping challenge was promptly declined, and so a still closer bond than that of brothers-in-arms was drawn between the famous houses of Douglas and Moray, and the three silver stars, the armorial bearings of Moray, shone forth on their azure field with the three silver stars of the Douglas.

Among his many offices of state Archibald the Grim was King's Justiciar in Dumfries. One day, as he sat dealing with the many cases which came before him as chief magistrate, he was approached by the cellarer of Melrose Abbey, who laid before him a petition and a charter of King Robert the Bruce, confirmed by Robert the Second, exempting the monks of the abbey and their estates in Dumfriesshire from all taxation. He begged the earl to instruct his officers to allow the ancient rights of Melrose to continue. Earl Archibald turned to his barons, the assessors of the court. "Ye hear, my lords," said he; "is there any objection to this?"

No one replied, so after a pause he continued: "As you have nothing to propose to the contrary, neither have I, nor do I wish at present to say

aught in opposition. My will is that my servants do not presume to do aught unjustly in the premises.”

One festal night many years after Otterburn, as in his castle of Cavers the Grim Douglas sat in state, while around him, amid flicker of torch and flash of wine-cup, were grouped his noble guests, one of his retainers entered the hall and approached the dais or raised platform at the farther end where the earl and the highest nobles were seated.

He brought the news that a poor woman was at the gate, praying that she might see her lord. The Douglas at once left his company and, with some difficulty, for the unhappy creature was nigh mad with grief, learned that a certain baron, one of his own vassals, had sentenced her husband to death for shooting a deer to feed his starving family, and that she came with a wife's prayer that the Douglas should stretch forth his arm to save. Grim to his country's foes and stern enough in the seat of justice as, when occasion needed, he undoubtedly was, there beat beneath the stout buff jacket of Black Archibald a warm and even tender heart. He ordered the woman to wait, and, disguising himself as a palmer or pilgrim, he set off alone to the castle of the cruel feudal lord.

It was very late indeed when he arrived there, and at first the porter would not let him in, but the “palmer” declared that his errand was of the

greatest import to the baron, and managed to find a mark or two in his scrip. Whereon he was brought into the presence of the castle's lord, who was none too well pleased at his intrusion.

"What wouldst thou with me at this hour of the night? Look to it, Sir Pilgrim, if thy matter be not of enough import!"

He pointed with meaning to a gibbet newly erected in the castle yard.

"It imports more than the safety of your life!" said Douglas, speaking in a monkish monotone, but with a quick, menacing energy he could not conceal.

"How, then? Make haste and speak clearly."

"I would save your wicked soul. In your castle vault lies a poor man awaiting death for no worse crime than that of shooting a fallow deer."

"What is that to thee?"

"This; I have not yet made three pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulchre, yet am I a servant of Him 'who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live!'"

The baron stared at him in utter amazement. The "pilgrim" kept his eyes humbly fixed on the ground. Then a violent fit of rage seized the feudal tyrant.

"Get thee gone, unhappy fool," he shouted, "thou knowest not to whom thou art speaking."

"Ay, I know by this time," quoth the palmer

grimly enough, “but go I will not until I have prayed you to spare the poor churl’s life. For sweet St. Mary’s sake, I beg, have mercy on him.”

“What right hast thou to ask?” sneered the baron.

“The right my calling gives me. The right of every man who honours justice. What is the life of a deer that a man’s life should pay for it?” answered Douglas sternly.

The baron broke into loud laughter.

“By St. Nicholas! ye shall hang together. A fine pair!” he shouted. “Ho! vassals, set me up a fresh gibbet for this canting fool.”

Black Archibald drew his hood aside and advanced a step into the torchlight. He set his face very close to that of the enraged baron, held him with his eyes for a few moments, and turned slowly on his heel. The castle’s lord sank slowly on a bench, and a half-stupefied stare came into his eyes.

That very night, while one poor peasant who had been nigh to the arms of death crept once again into those of his rejoicing wife, the shadow of the evil-doer passed for ever from the land and his body swung in the night-winds from his topmost battlements. Black Archibald might be “grim,” yet he not only honoured justice but loved mercy.

He was a fine type of all that was best in his hot-blooded, brilliant, and most valiant race. A

skilled councillor, a wise judge, a great statesman, he was yet, in heart and soul, a warrior first. His mighty war-blade was "two ells in length and too heavy for any other man to lift easily." Froissart tells us that "Sir Archibald Douglas was a good knight and much feared by his enemies; when near to the English he would dismount, and wield an immense sword, whose blade was two ells long, which another could not have lifted from the ground; but he found no difficulty in handling it, and gave such terrible strokes that all on whom they fell were struck to the ground."

He was also, as men went then, a very pious lord and a great benefactor of the beautiful abbeys, Lincluden and Sweetheart, in his lordship of Galloway. He built a lovely collegiate church at Bothwell, in which his daughter Marjorie was married to the Duke of Rothesay, son of Robert the Third and heir to the throne. Two sons of his, Archibald and James, became afterwards fourth and seventh Earls of Douglas respectively.

The great lifework of Black Archibald closed on Christmas Eve 1400, when he died of fever in the Thrieve, his own fortress. He was laid to rest in Bothwell, his own chapel.



CHAPTER VII.

THE LORD OF WAR.

" . . . Renowned Douglas ! whose high deeds,
Whose hot incursions and great name in arms
Holds from all soldiers chief majority
And military title capital
Through all the kingdoms that acknowledge Christ."

SHAKESPEARE.

BLACK ARCHIBALD's eldest son, the fourth earl, named after his father, succeeded quietly to the full dignities of the chief of the house of Douglas. In 1390 he married Margaret, the eldest daughter of his future king, Robert the Third.

He had already, as Master of Douglas, given fair promise of his soldiership. George, Earl of March, had paid the king a large sum in earnest of the marriage of his daughter, Elizabeth, to the heir-apparent, the Duke of Rothesay. As we know, the "grim" Douglas thwarted this proposed alliance, and, with the Estates or Parliament of Scotland to back him, gave his own daughter, Marjorie, to the king's son, and with her a larger dowry than that which March had already paid. Therefore, George

of Dunbar renounced his loyalty to the King of Scots and joined the English.

He attached himself to the house of Percy. Early in the spring of 1400 they crossed the Border and raided East Lothian as far as Popple. But the Master of Douglas surprised them, broke up their camp, chased them to Berwick, and returned with all their plunder and much spoil beside, the lance and banner of Sir Thomas Talbot among his trophies.

Again in the autumn of 1402 he was in the field against the same enemy. With the Earls of Angus and Moray and an army of ten thousand men he entered England, and ravaged the country as far as Newcastle. This time George, Earl of March, prevailed upon the Percies to await the return of the Scots. So at Wooler their army rested until the first flashing light on the Douglas lances warned them of the near approach of the Scots.

Douglas gave the order to encamp at Millfield, whereon Hotspur, with the Popple fight in his mind, advanced to attack him. But he was on his guard, and, moving out of camp, drew up his battle lines on the hill of Homildon.

It was almost the same position as that at Halidon Hill nearly seventy years before. When Hotspur was all for a fiery charge, March held him back. Waving his hand toward the dark, closely-

formed columns on the hill, he pointed out what a fine target they made for England's archery.

The short sharp order to defile was given, the archers ran swiftly to the van of the English battle, and then with a hissing sound as of fierce rain the steely hail of death poured upon the packed Scottish ranks.

Thus once more was the terrible drama of Halidon seen on a northern battlefield. Again there were gallant charges, splendid but hopeless, too late to turn the tide of battle. As the stubborn column stood there, still and silent, in the front of doom, Sir John Swinton shouted loudly, "Better die in open fight than be shot down like deer." One, Adam Gordon, an old foe of his, begged his pardon, was knighted, and rode down the hill at the English with his forlorn hope. They fell, to a man, beneath the gray-goose shafts; the Douglas ordered a general advance, but it was too late. Angus, Moray, and Murdoch were made prisoners, and with them Douglas himself, wounded five times and with the loss of one eye.

The ransom of these nobles would have amounted to a handsome sum, but there was bad blood between King Henry the Fourth and the great house of Percy, to which he owed his throne. He had refused to allow them to ransom Mortimer, Earl of March, rightful heir to the crown, who had been captured by the Welsh chieftain, Owen

Glendower. Mortimer was closely related to the Percies by marriage, and they were infuriated with the king's conduct. But when now, adding insult to injury, King Henry sent swift messengers to them forbidding them to ransom their Scottish captives, their wrath knew no bounds. Nor was it lessened by the king's gift to the Earl of Northumberland of the earldom and lands of the Douglas, for they were not his to give, and how could the Percies hold them?

Hotspur, as always, acted swiftly. He made an alliance with the king's unconquerable Welsh enemy, Owen Glendower. To his renowned captive, Archibald of Douglas, he offered freedom without ransom if he would but fight under the blue-lion banner of the Percies as he had fought at Homildon. Douglas was the enemy of the English king, and, apart from the ancient Border rivalry, there would seem to have been nothing but a mutual respect and admiration existing between the famous lieutenants, the Percy and the Douglas. The latter willingly agreed, and swore to slay Henry the king with his own hand.

At Shrewsbury the armies met. The king had been careful to don the armour of an ordinary knight, and he had caused several of his nobles to wear coronets over their helms. This was as well for him, for Hotspur and Douglas, the most renowned swordsmen in Europe, sought him all

over the field. But the laurels of that day rest with Douglas himself. He fought magnificently, seeking the king everywhere in the teeth of the battle. The Earl of Stafford was the first to pay for his "borrowed title." Well might Hotspur exclaim in the words our greatest poet has given him,—

"O Douglas, hadst thou fought at Holmedon thus,
I never had triumphed upon a Scot."

Stafford fell beneath the Douglas's sword, and three more "kings" likewise were cut down by Earl Archibald, who pierced the royal ranks again and again in his fierce zeal to find Henry.

At last they met. There was a minute's heavy fence, and then the king was struck down upon his knee. But the press of knights bore in and saved him. And in their turn Hotspur's chivalry, led by him into the heart of the king's force, were surrounded, pushed back, pressed in on all sides.

The gallant Percy drew them together. He would cut a way back to his own lines. But even as he raised his visor to give the order to charge, the fatal arrow flew that pierced his brain. Then fell England's best and bravest knight, and from that moment the issue of battle was never in doubt. Still struggling furiously Archibald Douglas strove to rally the men, to vanquish his own ill-fortune. But he was borne back in the swarm of fugitives, while

his horse stumbled in ascending a hill ; and, sorely wounded, he at last yielded himself a prisoner again. The Percy rebellion was at an end, and the house of Lancaster, for a time at least, securely seated on the throne of England.

Six long years passed before he regained his liberty, and thenceforth brave Earl Archibald won much of his fame in France. In the year 1415 King Henry the Fifth of England won his marvellous victory over the French at Agincourt, a battle very like those of Crécy and Poitiers. As we have seen, the Douglasses were ever ready to lend their aid to France in these wars, and the eldest son and the son-in-law of the earl, Archibald, Earl of Wigtown, and the Earl of Buchan, were in command of a Scottish force of some two thousand men in the service of the French king. The only battle in the lifetime of Henry the Fifth in which the French cause triumphed was that at the Bridge of Bauge in 1421, where the Douglasses cut in pieces the English force under the Duke of Clarence, Henry's brother ; Clarence himself was slain.

The kings of England and France, Henry the Fifth and Charles the Sixth, died at about the same time, and the successor of the latter, Charles the Seventh, delighted with his Scottish warriors, sent their two leaders to urge the great Earl of Douglas himself to come to the aid of France. Though now

over fifty years of age, this fierce son of Black Archibald had never enough of fighting. But somehow, like Sir James "the Good" before his voyage with Bruce's heart, he had "an ill-divining soul" about this journey to France. He made gifts to the Church, and charged his son, the Earl of Wigtown, to deal kindly with the monks of Melrose, as his own father had done before him.

As he was about to embark, an incident occurred which shows how dear was this old wardog to his men. Sir Alexander Home of Dunglas was sending his brother David with the expedition, and had come to witness its departure. At the last moment Earl Douglas turned to Home,—

"Alexander, I little thought that anything would ever befall to part us twain."

"Nor shall anything part us now," cried Home, and causing David to give up his equipment to him, he sailed with the Douglas on this last fateful voyage.

But even yet there were two great honours in store for Earl Archibald. King Charles named him lieutenant-general of the French forces, and created him duke of the lovely province of Touraine. From the distant day of the Frankish King Clovis the Lord of Touraine had always been a Canon of St. Martin, and as such the Douglas was duly installed by the archbishop of the cathedral at Tours. This is how the fourth, fifth,

and sixth earls of the Black Douglas house were likewise Dukes of Touraine.

The Duke of Bedford was regent for the boy king of England, Henry the Sixth, and commander of the English forces in France. He laid siege to Ivry. Earl Douglas marched to relieve it, but before he could arrive the town had yielded. Douglas therefore retired towards Verneuil to find that town also garrisoned by the English. That this Earl of Douglas, though unfortunate in battle, was a skilful general is shown by the clever plan he now adopted. Ordering some of his own men to be smeared with blood and led at the tails of horses, he brought them up close to the walls, where they told the garrison that Bedford had been completely defeated. Verneuil surrendered !

Douglas was now reinforced by the French, under the Duke of Alençon, the Marshal Lafayette, and, most unfortunately, the Viscount of Narbonne. "John-of-the-leaden-sword," as Douglas scornfully termed the Duke of Bedford, sent a message into the Scottish lines to the effect that he desired to "drink with the Earl of Douglas." To this challenge Earl Archibald replied that it was for that very purpose he had travelled from Scotland. In his strong position he gave the order to await the English attack. But Narbonne, envious and jealous of his superior, swore that sooner than obey such a *cowardly* command—as he dared to term it—he

would advance on the English himself, even if the lieutenant-general should refuse to support him.

The rash young viscount was soon in trouble, for rather than leave him to his fate, the great-hearted Douglas commanded his army to advance. But the French broke and fled, leaving the Scots hemmed in, hopelessly entangled in the English lines. "No quarter!" was the order of the day, previously agreed upon by the Douglas and his ancient foe, Bedford, and fighting like wolves at bay the Douglas men, James, the earl's second son, Buchan, and the fierce old hero of Shrewsbury himself, found soldiers' deaths that day. Thus, to save the life of a disobedient under-officer, fell the fourth Earl of Douglas, dying as he had lived, by the ancient light of that high-souled motto "Noblesse oblige."

CHAPTER VIII.

CATHARINE DOUGLAS.

"This old arm's withered now. 'Twas once
Most deft 'mong maidens all,
To rein the steed, to wing the shaft,
To smite the palm-play ball.

"In hall adown the close-linked dance
It has shone most white and fair ;
It has been the rest for a true lord's head,
And many a sweet babe's nursing bed,
And the bar to a king's chambère."

D. G. ROSSETTI.

A FEW months before the departure of the gallant hero of Shrewsbury for France on that fatal campaign of Verneuil in 1424, King James the First was released from his captivity in England and returned to his Scottish realm.

He was a true poet this James, and a great lover of Geoffrey Chaucer's poems. One morn, while still at Windsor, he saw from the castle tower, walking with two bower-maidens on the lawns, a lovely English lady, Joan Beaufort, a member of the

noble Lancastrian house of Beaufort, the daughter of John, Earl of Somerset, fourth son of John of Gaunt. The young poet-king at once fell in love with her, and the sweetest of his poems, "The Kingis Quair,"* is composed about her and in her honour.

"Ah! sweet, art thou a worldly creature
Or heavenly thing in likeness of nature?"

Not long after this he married the lady; and this alliance, backed by the efforts of his chief nobles, and especially of Archibald, fourth Earl of Douglas, procured his release.

In April 1424 he crossed the Border, and it was soon seen that James Stewart, first of that name, had other thoughts in his head besides those of love and poetry.

He was an ardent reformer, and the wild and desperate lawlessness that he saw in the kingdom aroused fierce wrath in his soul. "If God give me but a dog's life, I'll make the key keep the castle and the bracken bush the cow throughout my realm of Scotland," he exclaimed savagely, meaning by this old proverb that he would set things in order, and with a strong hand. But in those days the great nobles did not understand sudden reforms, and they took it very ill if any one, even the king, interfered with their privilege—in other words, with

* "The King's Book."

the right to do exactly as they liked, as the families of many of them had done for centuries.

But King James was a man of his word, in this respect at least. Scarcely a month after he had crossed the Border he ordered the arrest of Walter, eldest son of Murdoch, Duke of Albany, of Fleming, of Cumbernauld, and Boyd of Kilmarnock. And in that same year, the first of his reign, he seized the old Earl of Lennox, father-in-law of the Duke of Albany, and committed him to prison along with Sir Robert Graham, son of Sir Patrick Graham of Kincardine. This act awoke in the heart of the Graham a hatred so fierce, so relentless, and so intense as to render him more wild beast than man, and he vowed his life thenceforth to one object, that of vengeance upon his king.

King James was crowned at Scone in May 1424, and but a year later, at the second meeting of his Parliament, he had Albany himself and his second son, Alexander, Lord Montgomery, and Albany's secretary, Alexander of Otterburn, arrested. They were tried by a council of twenty-one peers, among whom was the fifth Earl of Douglas. Sentence of death was passed upon them, and they were executed on the Heading Hill at Stirling. But the Albanys had always been popular, and as they were led out their noble appearance roused deep sympathy in the hearts of the people.

Without any clear reason the king regarded the

Earl of Douglas with gloomy suspicion, chiefly, perhaps, because of his great power and influence. Certainly Earl Archibald did nothing to justify his monarch's distrust. He held himself aloof, and looked on coldly and haughtily when the sea of seething discontent aroused by the king's energy and violence burst into storm. In spite of his prudent and dignified conduct the great earl was imprisoned for a short time in Lochleven Castle, and Sir John Kennedy also in Stirling.

King James determined indeed to be king. But although he thought that in suppressing his nobles by these stern measures he was lightening the burdens of his poorer subjects, it seems that he was, in reality, aiming chiefly at the absolute power of the crown; for great discontent was caused among the commons as well as among the nobility by two of the very first measures he passed through the Scottish Estates. The first allowed the king to summon his vassals at will, and demand to see the charters by which they held their lands; the second was a tax, a heavy one too, of twelve pennies in the pound, levied on all his subjects, to pay his own ransom to England. This imposition only lasted two years, so great was the outcry it aroused.

In 1431, the very year in which King James caused the arrest of the Earl of Douglas and Sir John Kennedy, he again imposed another similar tax on the people, this time of two pennies in the

pound, for the marriage of his daughter Margaret to the Dauphin of France, afterwards Louis the Eleventh.

Thus, while James had shown himself as able a monarch as he was a scholar, far ahead indeed of the dark age in which he lived, he had offended both nobles and commons. The former could never feel secure, either of land or of life, under such rule, and they were bitterly angry with the king for allowing their relatives to languish in English prisons as hostages for his ransom; while the latter murmured under taxes to which they had never been subjected during the regency of the Duke of Albany.

And then the Graham broke prison and fled, friends from without aiding him. He fled into the Highlands, the country of the "wild Scots." Thence he sent a menace to his king,—

"No liege of mine thou art; but I see
From this day forth alone in thee
God's creature, my mortal foe."

He was outlawed and a price set upon his head, any one who met him was to slay him, he was what our forefathers termed a "wolf's head," and none might venture to give him food or shelter. Yet he found both until such time as Fate gave him the chance of revenge.

In February 1437 King James summoned a great assembly to Perth to receive a legate from

the Pope. The castle being under repair, the nobles met in the Black Friars' Convent without the walls of the city, and there the king took up his residence. Queen Joan was with him and a brilliant assemblage of her maids-of-honour.

A sparkling group they made standing around the king on that night of February 20. Daughters of Scotland's noblest were there, arrayed in the splendidly picturesque attire of the fifteenth century, with all its gorgeous colours of richest sendal and cramoisie and winged white headdress. But the queen of them all was a tall, lithe, dark beauty of the house of Douglas, strongly built, with the supple ease and grace of youth and robust health, with the olive complexion and crisp, wavy, blue-black locks of her race, the queen's favourite bower-maiden, Catharine Douglas. And not one of the fair maids-of-honour got so many sidelong glances, so many low bows, full of deference and meaning, as this dark girl with eyes like lance points. James himself seemed to grace her with marked deference, and one tall, martial-looking courtier followed her every movement with a keen interest in his earnest face. His name was Alexander Lovell of Bolunnie, and he had vowed his life to the service of this maid of the house of Douglas.

At midnight King James called for the parting cup of trust, and withdrew with his queen and the bower-maidens. Ere long the clank of armed men

on the stairway showed that the bloodhound had scented his prey and was running close upon the trail. There, of the few loyal hearts that rested in the Black Friars' Convent, not one but knew that Sir Robert Graham was leading that bloodthirsty band up the old creaking stairs. But, in truth, the Graham was only an instrument in the hands of one far greater than he. The old Earl of Athol was grandson of Robert the Second by his second marriage, and many thought that he had a better claim to the throne than had the Stewarts themselves. At any rate, it was his brain that hatched the plot.

And now, indeed, there was a rush to bolt and bar the great door of the royal room. But, alas! the bower-maidens found nothing wherewith to bar it. Burst locks, empty bolt-holes, and bar-sockets alone confronted them. The great bars had been taken away. The path of treason lay open, rendered easy by the aid of Athol's grandson, the king's own private chamberlain.

Then all the gallant blood of that superb race from which she sprang surged up in the heart of Catharine Douglas. The king and queen were trying with might and main to wrench up a plank in the flooring with the aid of the fire-irons. Time was needed, and time was found.

The gallant girl thrust her bared arm through the empty iron stanchions where the bar had been. The planks of the floor creaked and gaped wide,



showing a small vault beneath. Even as James lowered himself down, the spear heads of the traitors were forced in between the door and the wall.

There was a creaking, sickening sound, not that of splintered planking, as Catharine Douglas fell back within the room. But when the armed men rushed over the ruins of the door, trampling on her too as they ran, the planks were in their place, the rushes strewn over them, and the queen and her frightened bower-maidens were the only occupants of the room.

But Catharine's heroism only served to save the doomed king for a while. In his fury one of the traitors dealt the queen a wound in the breast; they stamped about the room, tearing down the arras curtains, searching everywhere in vain. Then out they filed to search the other rooms and the grounds of the convent; and this proving equally futile, they returned, bringing with them Robert Stewart, the chamberlain, who knew that room only too well. He held a torch to the floor, and they slashed the plank away. There stood the king in a little vault, wherefrom he might have escaped to the grounds had not the opening to it been blocked up the day before by his own command, in order that the ball might not roll into it when he played at the palm-play.

But James was a strong, active man, and as Sir John Hall leapt down upon him, knife in hand, the king seized him by the shoulder-blades and flung

him heavily. Sir Thomas Hall, the man's brother, followed him; but gripping this second foe by the neck, James flung him above the first man.

And then the Graham leapt down, sword in hand, and struck James through the breast. The butcher's work was soon over, and there lay the poet-king, a bleeding victim of his own zeal for reform and absolute power.

But now outrang the alarm bell, and the traitors fled. Queen Joan set William Douglas, second Earl of Angus, on their track, and within a month Walter, Earl of Athol, Sir Robert Graham, and all the chief conspirators were taken. They were savagely executed with such barbaric torture as caused a shudder even in those days.

But Catharine, the fair and brave, lived to wed her stalwart lover, Alexander Lovell of Bolunnie, and to this day her descendants, the Barlas family in Scotland, bear for their crest a broken arm. Ever after she was the loved and trusted friend of that widowed queen who wept solitary in the chapel of the Black Friars' Convent, mourning her poet, her lover, her king.

“And ‘O James!’ she said,—‘My James!’ she said,—
‘Alas for the woeful thing
That a poet true and a friend of man,
In desperate days of bale and ban,
Should needs be born a king!’”*

* D. G. Rossetti, “The King's Tragedy.”

CHAPTER IX.

TWO BRAVE BOYS.

"Yet ah that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!"

FITZGERALD.

ON his departure for the fatal campaign of Verneuil, Earl Archibald the Fourth had left his eldest son, Archibald, whom we have till now called Earl of Wigtown, in Scotland to treat with the English court about the release of James the First, King of Scotland, then a prisoner in England, to rule the vast Douglas estates, and also, in case of mischance to himself, to succeed to them. The importance of this last forethought in those troublous times will appear as we proceed.

When the news of the gallant death of the old hero of Shrewsbury reached Scotland, the Earl of Wigtown became fifth Earl of Douglas. By permission of her brother, King James the First, Margaret, the widow of the fourth earl, retained the lordship of Galloway and resided at the Thrieve, where she proved a most able ruler.

With regard to Earl Archibald himself, he led,

on the whole, a surprisingly quiet life for a Douglas of those days. The suspicions in which James the First, when freed from his English captivity, held him, were as groundless as they were unworthy of the poet-king. From the fierce atmosphere of dangerous discontent created amongst the great nobles by King James's violent methods of reform, the Earl of Douglas held himself coldly aloof. His power and influence were so great that a dangerous, suspicious man like King James Stewart could only regard him with mistrust, and suddenly, without any cause, he imprisoned him in Lochleven Castle, and, at the same time, placed Sir John Kennedy under ward in Stirling.

But not for long. In the same year the queen, the nobility, and the great churchmen united, asked his freedom of the king, and the Douglas was released. He spent much of his time in France, but, after the murder of King James in 1437, returned to Scotland. The boy king, James the Second, was only six years old, and the Earl of Douglas was appointed lieutenant-general of the realm.

It is a dark page in the history of Scotland and of her most illustrious house that we are now going to read. King James the First had shown much favour to two men not in the ranks of the nobility—Sir William Crichton, governor of Edinburgh Castle, and Sir Alexander Livingstone,

governor of Stirling Castle; and these two men were constantly quarrelling as to who should be guardian of the person of the young king. This was, of course, a matter of the utmost importance to political parties in those days, because he who was the king's guardian could issue any warrant he wished in the king's name, and, getting it signed with the royal seal, maintain that it proceeded from the Crown of Scotland itself. The pair were naturally despised by the great families, especially by that of Douglas, and looked on as "new men lifted up to the highest degree." The queen-mother, Jane Beaufort of the house of Lancaster, favoured Livingstone, and by stealth she got the boy king out of Edinburgh and brought him to Stirling. Both hoped for the aid of the Earl of Douglas, and Crichton sent him a message desiring "to have support from him against the governor and the queen, who he supposed would come shortly to invade him; which, if he would grant, he promised faithfully to give the said earl mutual support, and should stand his friend loyally and truly beyond all others, when it should happen to him to have to deal with his enemies." Earl Archibald would scarcely hear the message out, but, says the old chronicler, with an "ireful countenance, like as he had been mad and furious," made reply,—

"It harms me little, I think, although such

mischievous traitors as Sir William Crichton and Alexander Livingstone, whom ye call governor, must make war on each other, and also it becomes not the honourable estate of noblemen to help any of them, although each one of them should ruin the other, so that there were not such a thing as any memory of them hereafter left to our descendants. As to myself, there is nothing more pleasant than to hear of war and discord between those two unhappy tyrants, and in especial where the beginning of their quarrel is not grounded upon a good cause, but upon a shameful and wicked ground. Would God I might see a miserable mischief befall them both, seeing they have deserved the same condignly through their own ambition, falsehood, pride, and arrogance. For I know it is the just judgment of God that deceitful tyrants, setting their whole purpose and intent to ruin others, should be punished in the sight of the world, according to their faults ; and especially (since) they have so oft offended noblemen and simple men of good life and conduct."

Soon after Crichton, now Chancellor of Scotland, had received this haughty reply, Livingstone laid siege to Edinburgh, and so suddenly that Crichton saw nothing for it but that he must surrender the fortress, strong as it was. But though a crafty, wicked man, this chancellor was also one of the most able and far-seeing men of his day, and he

seemed, as Livingstone himself said, to mistrust everything and every one—to suspect a snare in every bush. He saw, clearly enough, that his real foe, and Livingstone's as well, was the Earl of Douglas, and that their only chance, and a very slender one at that, lay in mutual friendship and in joining their forces. So he arranged a meeting with Livingstone, now guardian of the young king and Governor of Scotland, told him the answer of Douglas, and pointed out to him that it was mere folly to be wiped from the face of the land by the Douglasses while engaged in their own discords; so, for fear of the great house, they resolved to be reconciled.

But so unsatisfactory did it seem to the Earl of Douglas that the young king should be a constant source of strife to these two turbulent statesmen, that he gave orders to prepare Rothesay Castle as a residence for King James, intending to take him altogether out of their hands. This wise step would have saved Scotland much distress, and, as we shall see, would perhaps have prevented one of the most fearful crimes recorded in her history; but before it could be effected, Douglas died of fever at Restalrig.

He left three children—William, fourteen years of age, who succeeded him as sixth Earl of Douglas; David, about a year younger; and Margaret, a child of seven, who grew into so lovely a girl that

she was soon known throughout Scotland as the Fair Maid of Galloway. And because the provinces of Galloway and Bothwell with all the lands of Moray were entailed to her—that is, they could not pass to the men of the house—the name and the fair memory of her is linked with all the future history of the Black Douglasses.

The boy earl, her brother, was the most handsome as well as the noblest youth in the whole of broad Scotland, about one-half of which he ruled as he pleased, as entirely and far more effectively than the king, or rather the king's guardian, Livingstone. Young William Douglas had all the beauty and lofty spirit of his splendid race, and even Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, the historian of the Stewarts, bound therefore to revile the Douglasses so far as in him lay, calls him "a young man of singular good appearance." He had the olive complexion, curly blue-black hair, and deep-brown eyes of his family. None of these are Scottish racial characteristics, but they were nevertheless common to nearly all the Black Douglasses, seeming to stamp them as a race different and apart from other Lowland houses, small or great.

At first Sir Alexander Livingstone formed a close alliance with Earl William Douglas, hoping through him to crush Sir William Crichton, with whom he was again at variance. But the chancellor was equal to the occasion, and seizing an opportunity

when the governor was a day's journey from Stirling, he laid ambush at dawn for the young king's hunting party, and persuaded James to return with him to Edinburgh Castle.

This daring step made Livingstone pause to consider. The young Earl of Douglas, his present ally, maintained all and more of the magnificence of his father, the fourth earl. When he rode out from the Thrieve or from Douglas or Bothwell, he was always attended by a long train of knights, sometimes even by one or two thousand steel-clad horsemen. His own dominions he ruled as an absolute king, and indeed, as he owned nearly half of Scotland, and that part too the Borderland, where the men from their constant practice in fighting the English were better soldiers than were to be found anywhere else, he was more to be feared than James Stewart himself. In fact, he was the greatest man in the land. It looked indeed as if the Douglasses meant to make their dominions a separate principality, independent entirely of the reigning house of Stewart. The shadow of the great house hung heavily over the upstart statesmen who governed for the young king, and seemed to them even to menace the throne itself; and, apart from their greatness and power, the Douglasses were closely related by intermarriage to the house of Stewart.

Scotland itself was in a terrible state. Outlaws,

brigands, and ruffians of every kind infested the land ; pillage, oppression, and even murder were everyday events ; and while, in reality, the constant strife between the ruling statesmen themselves was the main cause of these disorders, Crichton and Livingstone, solely from their fear of him, pointed to the young Earl of Douglas as the fountain-head of all the misrule and violence, and accused him of giving shelter to all evil-doers who fled from the tardy arm of the law.

Now in this charge there was no justice at all. The Douglas surely assumed no more pomp than, for instance, the Lindsays of Crawford, who affected a royal state, held their heralds, and occasionally assumed the style of princes in the numeration of their ancestors and themselves, as "David the First, David the Second, Alexander the First, Alexander the Second, of the name Earls of Crawford." They had also a petty parliament consisting of the great vassals of the earldom, with whose advice they acted on great and important occasions. The young Earl William of Douglas married Maud Lindsay, daughter of Alexander the Second, Earl of Crawford.

But Livingstone and Crichton, fearing, not for their country but solely for themselves, laid their heads together, and were again reconciled from fear of the boy earl, as they had been once before from the fear of his father. Young Douglas had claimed

from the French king the duchy of Touraine and the lordship of Longueville, which were his by clear right of direct descent from the fourth Archibald, his grandfather, who had fallen fighting so bravely for France at Verneuil. Charles granted the claim, and thus William Douglas became third Duke of Touraine.

This, and the splendour of his train, when he had attended the Council of Stirling in 1439, roused the fears of the chancellor and the governor. Knowing well that to proceed openly against the house of Douglas could but end in their own downfall, they sent letters to the earl, full of flattering words and deceitful promises, inviting him to Edinburgh to be a companion to the king, and to take whatever part in the government should please him best.

Earl Archibald, his father, had given his sons the excellent advice: "That they should never go both together where there was any appearance of danger, lest it should be their ruin and that of their house."

How comes it, then, that a gallant company is riding north-east from Thrieve, bound for Edinburgh, one gray November morning—Earl William Douglas, his brother David, and Sir Malcolm Fleming of Cumbernauld, with so few knights in their company?

That is what the Douglas cavaliers are wondering;

but they are soldiers and Douglasses, and will follow their chief though it be to the death. Vain are the frowns and head-shakings of the wiser and more experienced among them when the earl, after resting two days, royally entertained, at the castle of Crichton, prepares to ride into Edinburgh itself. Fleming has observed the many messengers that go between Crichton and Edinburgh. In vain he tries to warn his lord. William Douglas has too great a soul to think evil of others, and the Crichton has received him as a friend. Vain, too, is the counsel of others in his train, that if he were bent on risking his life in a city hostile to his house, he should at least send David home again; for, reining sharply round, he thus addresses his company:—

“I know well that it is a perpetual pest of great houses that they have ever about them some men that are impatient of peace, who make gain from the perils, labours, and miseries of their lords; and because in peace they are restrained by the bridle of the law, they are ever stirring up strife and sedition, so that in troubled times they may have greater scope and liberty for their wicked pursuits. For myself, I rest rather on the known wisdom and prudence of the governor and chancellor, than to give ear to your suspicious surmises.”*

* David Hume of Godscroft,

At last even young David grows suspicious, and rides up to his brother's right hand to entreat him to return to their island home of Thrieve. Right sharply the earl answers,—

“It is not fit for thee, David, to listen to such vain, unhappy flatterers, who are ever the cause of trouble between noblemen. No man in my company shall think such evil things, let alone speak of them to me.”

And riding on, in the pride of youth and power, he passes into Edinburgh.

Right royally was he received by regent and chancellor, and the boy king rejoiced in his brave, high-spirited cousins. The few Douglas cavaliers were lodged in the town, and only the earl, his brother, and Sir Malcolm Fleming were admitted into the castle itself.

There, in the splendid banqueting-hall, built only six years before, the feast was laid on St. Catharine's Day, November 24. There lamp and torch shone on gold and silver flagon, and jewelled collar and bracelet flashed back their rays in dazzling splendour. There old grievances were forgotten, mistrust and guile laid aside, save in the evil hearts of two men, well on in years, who sat on the daïs, or low platform, with the king, on whose right and left hand were the two young Douglasses. Young James, all smiles and gaiety, a careless little boy, jested with David, casting

now and then an admiring glance at the handsome face of Earl William on his right. But o'er the hard, sharp-cut features of Crichton stole at times a look, half triumphant, half fearful, and even the smug self-satisfied countenance of the governor, Livingstone, wore an expression of worry and anxiety. They glanced continually at each other and at the folding doors at the west end of the hall.

At last, as the young king was about to rise, three or four servitors came through those doors, bearing between them a great covered dish. Up to the daïs they came, and laid their burden before the Earl of Douglas. There, on the king's own board, grinned the symbol of death—the head of a bull. A shudder passed along the great hall, as if a chill mist had suddenly fallen upon all present.

On all, save one. The boy earl sat there, careless and unmoved, too high his race, too lofty its traditions, for him to give way to fear.

The guard of Edinburgh broke in on every side and bound the two boys and Malcolm Fleming. The little king wept sorely when at last he understood.

“Lord Chancellor,” he murmured, “for God’s sake, if thou wishest any favour from me, let them alone and save their lives.”

“Be silent, James,” answered Crichton; “it is for no private hate of mine to Douglas or his house

that he must suffer death this day, but because he is an open foe to thine own person and a known traitor to this realm. Never shall the land have peace and rest while he lives ; and the sooner he is cut off the better for its quiet."

The foul work was quickly done. Dragged before a mock tribunal, over which the young king was forced to preside, they were condemned to instant death by the axe. Without a shudder, without a flinch, nay, with heads erect as to a bridal, went forth those valiant lads to their doom.

As for Sir Malcolm Fleming, he too died on the same block a few days afterwards. The traitors dared not let him live, for he knew too much !

CHAPTER X.

THE GREAT SOUL OF
EARL WILLIAM.

"But I was born so high,
Our eery buildeth in the cedar's top,
And dallies with the wind and scorns the sun."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE clumsy and abominable crime of Crichton, the murder of two noble boys on September 24, 1440, served his foul purpose for a little time only.

The vast estates of the Douglas house were divided thereby, it is true, and James of Avondale, granduncle of the murdered children, became seventh Earl of Douglas. But the little girl Margaret was lady of the lordships of Galloway and Bothwell and countess of the earldom of Wigtown. Annandale, which had been forfeited by the Earl of March, became Crown land again.

But he who succeeded to the bulk of the possessions of the Douglas, James of Avondale, called "the Gross" from his corpulence, was an old man and unfit to take an active part in the

stirring life of the times. He made no attempt to revenge the death of his grandnephew, and the fact that not one of his six sons raised a hand in the matter has caused many to believe that he had a share in, or at least consented to, the crime. But of this there is no evidence whatever. He died in 1443, leaving six sons—William, James, Archibald, Hugh, John, and Henry; and four daughters—Margaret, Beatrix, Janet, and Elizabeth. Of these, only the first five sons played leading parts in their house's history.

William succeeded as eighth Earl of Douglas. He was tall, dark, and shapely of person, of elegant address, and of the utmost charm of manner. Owing to these personal graces, he soon became far more intimate with the young king than was any other member of the Scottish court; and, unlike the Douglasses who had gone before, he sought to gain and keep the favour of his monarch, not because he really desired it for himself, but because it seemed to him needful for the achievement of the great end he kept ever in view. So while this able young man appeared to detest everything that James disliked and to approve his every desire, it was in reality his own hand that guided the king's actions; and after a very short while, though James Stewart, second of that name, sat on the throne, and wielded the orb and sceptre, the *real* king who made laws

and framed foreign treaties, who guided the whole course of the nation's affairs, was William Douglas, and King James named him Lieutenant-General of Scotland.

One aim, and one alone, was ever before the young earl's eyes—to make the house of the Black Douglasses greater than ever it had been before, greater than any European house below the Crown, greater—his enemies whispered—than the Crown of Scotland itself. His proud, handsome face and staid, courteous manner soon won him favour in fairer eyes than those of King James. Margaret, the Fair Maid of Galloway, had, on the murder of her brothers, been at once put under his protection and that of his next brother James.

The child, their second cousin, was but twelve years of age at this time, one of the loveliest girls in Scotland, and as beautiful as in after years was Mary Stewart herself.

Her brother, the ill-fated Earl William, was a singularly handsome youth, and Margaret bore a very close likeness to him: she had his deep-brown eyes, his wavy black hair, and supple grace of form. And just as the old historian Pitscottie, a fierce foe to the Douglasses, calls him “a young man of singular good appearance,” so all Scotland acknowledged that the Fair Maid of Galloway, Lady Margaret, was, in truth, as her pretty name

implies, "the pearl" of Scottish lassies. Perhaps it was Earl William's resemblance to her handsome brother that caused fair Margaret to answer when the Douglasses of the junior branches of her great house, the young Anguses and Mortons of Dalkeith, flocked around her with offers of marriage,—

"I will not marry any Douglas save it be my dear Cousin William."

This betrothal of Margaret Douglas at the early age of twelve was no unusual event. The opposition of the other branches of the house of Douglas made haste necessary, and it was needful, if Earl William's life-object were to be achieved, that her great estates of Galloway, Bothwell, and Wigtown should remain under the direct government of the chief of the house of Douglas. Earl William of course saw this, and he beat down all opposition with a high hand. The Pope's permission was procured, Angus and Morton had to stand aside, and William, eighth Earl of Douglas, married his lovely cousin in St. Bride's Chapel in the year 1444.

So important indeed was this marriage in the later history of the Black Douglasses that we find its influence in almost every great event thereafter. But for the present it is enough to notice that it entirely undid the black work of Livingstone and Crichton on St. Catharine's Day 1440.

Nor had William Douglas forgotten that foul

work. He had already besieged, taken, and destroyed the castle of Barnton belonging to Crichton; now he beset the old chancellor himself in Edinburgh. After a long and wearisome siege Crichton surrendered to the lieutenant-general; but secret friends of his, chief among them a very able man, Bishop Kennedy of St. Andrews, had made things easy for him. His forfeit life was spared; he submitted to the king, and received again his chancellorship. But not even his powerful secret friends could have won for him such terms as these had he not possessed a champion whose military power and influence were inferior only to that of the Black Douglas himself. James Douglas, the third Earl of Angus, head of the house of Angus, called the "Red Douglas" in contrast to the head of the mighty senior line, was mortally offended at the honours showered upon Earl William, and still more so that he had married Margaret of Galloway, whose fair person and rich estates he thought should have graced his own family. The chief stronghold of the Red Douglas was Tantallon on the North Sea shore, near Berwick, Tantallon whose

"Dizzy steep
Hung o'er the margin of the deep."

But at this time none in all the land might show his head where the Black Douglas walked.

The Great Soul of Earl William. 93

A decree of forfeiture was pronounced against Angus; whereupon Crichton surrendered Edinburgh. Angus also submitted.

Earl William, by far the greatest man in Scotland, was now able to turn his hand to his great life-object, the glorification of his house. To increase the splendour of the name of Douglas he ennobled his brothers, Archibald, Hugh, and John. Archibald, by marriage with Elizabeth Dunbar, became Earl of Moray, thus bringing that great earldom under the house of Douglas; Hugh was made Earl of Ormond; and John, Lord of Balvany. No earldom was conferred on the earl's brother James, a splendid soldier and next in age to himself. He was known simply as the Master of Douglas.

Meanwhile, great events were in progress. In spite of a truce with England, the Percy and Sir Robert Ogle crossed the Border and burned Dunbar, while the Earl of Salisbury burned Dumfries. Then Douglas, with his brother Hugh of Ormond, entered England and destroyed Alnwick, and returning again, burnt Warkworth, both castles of the Percies.

To avenge the ruin of his castles, Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, sent his eldest son with an army of six thousand men, who encamped near Gretna, on the banks of the river Sark. Hugh Douglas, Earl of Ormond, advanced to attack him; but Percy was on his guard. The English had

with them a famous champion, Magnus of the Red Beard, called in derision by the Scots "Magnus of the Red Mane." But the Englishmen's "father-in-war," by which title he was also known, because of his desperate valour, availed not to turn the tide of fight against a Douglas of the Black. Recovering from the first withering storm of cloth-yard shafts, the swift valour of Ormond, supported by a brave knight, Wallace of Craigie, and by the Maxwells and Johnstons of Annandale, beat the English back into the estuary of the Sark, in full flood at the time. The Scots lost only six hundred men; the English, three thousand, amongst whom "Magnus of the Red Mane." Young Percy, Sir John Pennington, and Sir Robert Harrington were captured and confined in Lochmaben Castle, and, say the old chroniclers, "there was also so great store of spoil gotten as no man remembered so much to have been gotten at any battle before"—"such abundance of riches, silver and gold gotten in the field, that the like was never seen in no man's days ever before." *

King James feasted young Ormond and the earl his brother with great magnificence in honour of this brilliant feat of arms. The house of Douglas had reached its summit of fame.

* Pitcottie.

CHAPTER XI.

SOVEREIGN POWER.

"One still strong man in a blatant land."

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON.

A RIGHT noble heart was that of William, eighth Earl of Douglas. The nine years of his rule as Viceroy of Scotland were the best and most prosperous the country experienced under the Stewarts. He it was who lightened many of the grievous burdens of the poorer classes, he who made good treaties of friendship and commerce with England and France. And for the sake of his own house, his wife, and his brothers, he could and did give up everything. For, in order to increase the greatness of his house, he spent most of his time at the court, thereby sacrificing a great deal of the pleasure he might have enjoyed from his own vast dominions.

Of course a man of such strength of mind and will made enemies. Such were Crichton, Bishop Kennedy, and Bishop Turnbull of Glasgow.

The first two of these succeeded in persuading

King James to disgrace the Livingstones. Old Sir James and his father were thrown into prison, while his two sons were executed. The Pope's jubilee falling in this year, 1450, Bishop Kennedy induced the king to send Douglas to Rome as his representative. He sailed with a princely following of five lords, six knights, fourteen esquires, and eighty men-at-arms, leaving his brother Hugh, Earl of Ormond, to manage the Douglas estates, but taking James, Master of Douglas, in his train.

This provided the chance the Crichton-Kennedy faction had been seeking for so long. They charged Ormond with misgovernment, and so inflamed the mind of the fiery king against the Douglasses that he raised an army and attacked some of the earl's castles.

With speed Earl William returned home to Scotland. Passing through England he was royally entertained by King Henry the Sixth and Queen Margaret of Anjou. Then he sent his brother James forward into Scotland to learn the king's mind towards him. A speedy reconciliation followed, which shows the hollow nature of the charges brought against the earl. The true character of his rule may be judged from the words of that old chronicler who writes that "all good Scottish men were right joyful of that agreement."

But the seed of mischief was sown. Kennedy, Crichton's firm ally, Turnbull, and the old



chancellor himself had poisoned the mind of the king so far that he was now persuaded that Douglas was aiming at the crown itself.

When the earl perceived that he was in positive danger at the court, he withdrew himself to the mightiest of the Douglas fortresses, the grim island tower of the Thrieve in Galloway.

And now to strengthen his own position he signed that famous bond with John, Earl of Crawford ("Tiger" Crawford as he was called), and John, Earl of Ross, two of the most powerful chieftains in Scotland, which brought about the final break between the Black Douglas and the Stewarts. The three earls formed a close league, pledging themselves to raise forty thousand men in a single day, an injury done to one of them was to be regarded as done to them all, and they were to act together against any person or persons within or without the realm.

The Bishops Kennedy and Turnbull and the old chancellor Crichton persuaded King James that the safety of his throne depended on the breaking up of this powerful league, and prevailed upon him to bid Earl Douglas to Stirling Castle. They sent Sir William Lander of Hatton with the letter, and a full and perfect safe-conduct under the royal seal for "the coming, and the staying, and the going, of William, Earl Douglas, to, at, and from the castle of Stirling."

Thereupon Earl William rode to Stirling, John, Lord Hamilton, accompanying him. No doubt he bethought him of another Earl William Douglas who had ridden to another royal castle to meet his king, this very James, and had never returned to the strong fortress of Thrieve; but so confident was he in his own high place, that he left the safe-conduct at home.

Proudly he rode up the great hill on which the royal palace stands in lofty state, encircled by its white terraces, from which he could overlook that plain whereon his famous ancestor, "the good Sir James," had played so glorious a part, the field of Bannockburn. He himself, in another way, had done as much for Scotland. The prosperity which the great soldier had won with the sword of war had been renewed and maintained by the great statesman with the weapons of justice and peace.

A strange event, however, befell at the gates. When Hamilton made to follow the Douglas into the castle, old Livingstone thrust him back with his halberd. This proves at once that what followed had been planned and arranged before Douglas was summoned.

After supper, at seven o'clock, James led Douglas into a small inner room, still shown, which adjoins the banqueting-hall. Only Sir Patrick Gray, an officer high in favour with the king and captain of his guard, was present. The interview could

not have lasted long. King James was angry and frightened, while murder fairly gleamed from his fiery eyes.

"This league between you and the Earls of Crawford and Ross, I will have you quit it at once," he demanded.

"Your grace must give me leave to warn the noblemen, otherwise I shall be counted a faith-breaker," answered Douglas. "I pray you have patience."

The king's fiery face was suffused with passion.

"If you will not break it, I will!" he shouted, and whipping out his poniard struck the earl in the breast. Gray drove a pole-axe down on his head, and, bursting from the outer hall, the courtiers stabbed and struck again and again, striking long after the great man was dead. Then they cast him through the window, and there, in the little green garden upon which it looks, he was buried.

This foul deed was done on February 20, 1452.

As a statesman, Earl William was the greatest of his race. Clear-headed, calm, and determined, full of all forethought and prudence, he knew well when to take a risk, and could calculate its results with astonishing accuracy. As a Douglas, the head of his family, he takes rank second only to "the Good Sir James" himself. February 20, 1452, is the blackest of all days in the annals of the Black Douglasses.

The Douglasses, infuriated at this red-handed act of violence, acknowledged James as their earl and chief, and paraded the streets of Stirling, giving the king open defiance. Whereas they had formerly declared themselves foes only to Crichton, Livingstone, and the bishops, they now publicly proclaimed King James a "perjured traitor to God and man, to be abhorred and detested by all men as such." And when summoned to Parliament, Earl James and his brothers fixed on the doors of the famous old church of St. Giles, in Edinburgh, papers declaring that, "the Earl Douglas would not obey command or order in the future because the king was but a murderer of his own blood, and a breaker of the laws of hospitality : a false, ungodly thirster after innocent blood."

All this was very true, but why did not Earl James at once attack the murderer monarch? There is no doubt that he was strong enough in troops and in resources of all sorts, so strong indeed that the king had decided to flee into France, but Bishop Kennedy persuaded him to remain, urging that, "if he could keep his person safe, and have patience to protract and linger out the time a while, his adversaries' faction would dissolve ere long and fall asunder of itself."

At this time, nevertheless, the crown of Scotland hung wavering between the houses of Stewart and Douglas. A swift, determined course of vengeance

for his slaughtered brother would have given Earl James the kingdom, and have set a Black Douglas on the throne, not only of Scotland but of England, in the days that were to be.

For James Douglas had many of the most powerful nobles on his side—James, Earl of Hamilton, John, Earl of Crawford, John, Earl of Ross, Lord of the Isles ; he had more soldiers and better trained than were those of the king. And it is to be remembered that the people were dismayed and horrified at the slaughter of Earl William, and by no means prepared to uphold the royal cause. Lastly, the house of Douglas, ever a “war-wall” against England, by reason of its glorious series of victories, dazzled with its splendour the eye of the nation. Why, then, did Earl James hold his hand ?

The answer is, perhaps, not far to seek. A goodly portion of the Douglas lands had, on her husband's death, gone back to fair Margaret, the Maid of Galloway. She herself, doubtless, was weary of that lonesome life she had led with one who was wrapped up so entirely in his statecraft that he had no time to spare for that domestic life which is at once the right and the happiness of every woman. And James of Douglas was handsome, tall, and strong as the pines of his own land, and eager to marry her. Moreover, this had most surely been the intention of Earl William when he

had named his brother *Master* of Douglas, this meaning that James was to succeed as his heir. But for a marriage with a second cousin, the widow of his brother, James needed the permission of the Pope, and this was, no doubt, the more easily to be obtained if the request were backed by the King of Scots himself.

So this was the bribe that stayed the uplifted hand of vengeance, King James undertaking to forward the marriage of James and Margaret Douglas.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DAY OF DOOM.

"O sir,

Your presence is too bold and peremptory,
And majesty might never yet endure
The moody frontier of a servant brow."

SHAKESPEARE.

So Earl James rode to the great island fortress of Thrieve to claim his bride, and a right fair sight was that to see, when the splendid young earl, now twenty-seven years of age, and one of the strongest men in Scotland, rode up to the ancient chapel of St. Bride of Douglas with the Fair Maid of Galloway at his side. Margaret Douglas was now just come of age, and to say that the promise of her childhood was fulfilled is scarcely enough. All the wondrous beauty of that dawn of her girlhood had deepened into the full flush of a loveliness so rare that it would have made of her a being strange and mysterious, but that the girl herself was just an ordinary Douglas of the Black, passionate but tender, quick to love or hate, slow to yield and swift to strike, a whole-hearted and loving woman.

And all the qualities of truest womanhood did her new husband, James Douglas, by his gallantry, his lordliness, his folly and weakness, bring out in her. Although to all appearances he was reconciled with the Stewart, he soon began to act in ways which must have been anything but pleasing to his king.

Malise Graham, Earl of Strathern, was in an English prison, to which he had been consigned as one of the sureties for King James the First, when that monarch was a captive at the English court. Douglas and Hamilton, both relatives of Strathern, made petition in 1453 to King Henry the Sixth of England for his release, and obtained it. But many people thought that these Stratherens had a clearer title to the throne than had the Stewarts themselves, therefore King James was not well pleased when Graham returned to Scotland.

There can be little doubt that the slaughter of Earl William had destroyed all chance of lasting trust between his brothers and his murderer. Earl James reopened the old treaty with the Earl of Ross, Lord of the Isles, and the result showed itself in a raid by Donald Balloch, kinsman of Ross, who burnt Inverkip in Renfrewshire, and destroyed Brodick Castle in Arran.

Then, suddenly, without any warning, the king took the field against the Black Douglas. In March 1455 he appeared before Inveravon Castle, near

Linlithgow, and captured it. Douglas sent James Hamilton of Cadzow into England to ask King Henry's aid. The moment was unfavourable, for it was the early spring of 1455; two months later England was herself plunged in the miseries of that most terrible civil war, the struggle between the great Plantagenet houses of York and Lancaster. Nevertheless, King Henry demanded that the earl should become his man, and should consent to receive an English garrison in the Douglas castles. But with all his faults, James was at heart as loyal to his country as his great ancestors had ever been. He had drawn the sword, it is true, but against the enemies of his house, the Stewart, the Crichton, and Kennedy—not against Scotland. So he sent this noble answer to the English court: "Rather would I die by any hand than leave such a blot on my house, than commit such a crime against my country for a fault done only by the prince and some particular men on whom I hope to be revenged without such shame as this."

By the counsel of his allies, chief among them James Hamilton of Cadzow, Douglas marched to relieve Abercorn Castle, which King James was besieging in person, at the head of thirty thousand men.

But when it was made known to him that Douglas would have at least forty thousand, the king was stupefied with terror, and took ship for

St. Andrews, to ask advice of that shrewd counsellor of his, Bishop Kennedy. The bishop handed him a sheaf of arrows, and desired him to break them across his knee.

"That is impossible," answered the king.

"Nevertheless, I shall show your grace how it may be done," rejoined Kennedy; and pulling forth the arrows one by one, he snapped them.

"You must deal with the conspirators in this way," said he.

When James, Earl of Douglas, arrived on the banks of the river Carron, that strange irresolution, which was his worst foe, made itself seen in the clearest manner. He paraded his force of forty thousand men, and even drew them up in battle array, but not all the urging of his friends could induce him to join battle with the Royalists and "cast the dice," as they said, "for the crown." He meant to overawe the king. "I tell you," said James, Earl of Hamilton, "that this occasion is such that if you do not lay hold of it, you shall never find the like again. Your want of resolution will be your overthrow."

"My heart will not suffer me nor serve me to fight against my sovereign," answered Douglas.

Now that crafty bishop Kennedy of St. Andrews, acting on his own parable of the arrows, had sent his servant to Lord Hamilton, offering him

free pardon and favour from the king if he would desert his master, the Black Douglas. Wherefore Hamilton, with a mind ill at ease, sought the tent of his chief, and asked what he intended to do—would he give the king battle or not—and he pointed out to him that the longer he delayed the fewer men he would have, while the king would grow stronger with every delay. James Douglas replied that if the Lord Hamilton were tired, he might depart when it pleased him. This he did at once, with a third of the army; and with the king offering a free pardon to such of the Douglas men as should come in to him within forty-eight hours, the host of the earl melted gradually away, and he himself, with a handful of stark, staunch Douglasses, rode across the Border into England. Abercorn, however, made a gallant resistance, and heavy cannon, under the management of a French gunner, had to be brought against it. Even then the Douglas garrison held out for a month, until May 1455.

But the west and south-west Border, the very home of the Douglasses, fairly bristled with battle. At the first note of war, the earl's brother Archibald, Earl of Moray, hastened south from his castle of Darnaway and joined Hugh of Ormond and John of Balvany in Annandale. They raised a small but valiant body of some of their best vassals, true to the splendid name and lofty traditions

of the Black Douglasses. The earl, too, joined them in Annandale.

The moment was a serious one. It looked as though the brothers would soon raise the entire Border. The Red Douglas, George, fourth Earl of Angus, was on the royal side, and the king made him captain of the host he sent on the trail of the Black Douglasses. After they had ravaged Annandale, Angus succeeded in hemming them in in Eskdale, on rising ground in the meadows that run along the banks of the Esk. His force was greatly superior in numbers, but the Douglasses, drawn up on some rather steep hills rising above the river, had a certain advantage in position—the Angus men had to come at them up the slopes of the hill. The place, now Langholm, was then called Arkinholm.

Then followed a terrible struggle, Johnstons, Gordons, Maxwells, and Stewarts all swarming up the broomy slopes, but they were beaten down again and again. Earl James and his brothers fought splendidly, but, utterly outnumbered, they were broken in the end. Archibald Douglas, Earl of Moray, was slain in the front of battle; Hugh Douglas, Earl of Ormond, severely wounded, was captured, and afterwards executed. At the last, when the hill and the river Esk beneath it ran blood, the earl rode off the field, escaping with his brother John of Balvany through a wood near at hand.

Thus ended the battle of Arkinholm, fought on May 1, 1455—a day of doom, indeed, for the Black Douglasses.

The important fortresses of Douglas and Strath-avon surrendered after Arkinholm. Abercorn, as has been said, was reduced, and fell at about the time the battle was fought; and at the beginning of June the tents and pavilions of the royal army were erected at Carlingwark, in the meadows of the Dee, where the siege of the Thrieve, the greatest of the strongholds of the Black Douglas and the only one still defiant, was begun.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARJORIE DOUGLAS.

"Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamour of waters and with might."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

THE tremendous strength of Thrieve,* the mighty island fortress of the Black Douglas, was increased by the marshy character of all the land around it, particularly towards Carlingwark and the east, where the power of King James lay. June passed in attempts of the most futile nature; the artillery brought to bear on the grim old keep did no more harm, as the great square freestones testify to this day, than so many boys' catapults might have done.† And to win the castle by storm had proved as hopeless as it had looked, when, in the second or third week of July, James appeared in person to complete his campaign amid the applause of the

* See Chapter VI.

† The daubs and splashes of the small gun-stones are plainly visible on the stones of the great gate to this day.

Anguses, Mortons, and other traitor Douglasses who hung around, waiting for their share of the spoil of the great senior house. The king made the abbey of Tongland his residence during the siege. He had spent the month of June at meetings of his Parliament and in sending accounts of the progress of the war to King Charles the Seventh of France.

James, ninth and last Earl of Douglas, had once again roused up the Lord of the Isles to make war on the king, and had then withdrawn himself to the safe side of the Border to try what aid he might hope for from England. Thrieve was garrisoned by the pick of the Douglas warriors, and fair Margaret herself was there, encouraging them in their stout resistance with a kindly word or smile of light. So it is small wonder that the besiegers made little progress, though the whirl and clamour of the siege rose hot and insolent about the great castle.

Hissing cannon-balls of stone crashed against the solid masonry of the great keep, stones slung from huge catapults rebounded with a clatter from its walls and splashed into the moat or went hissing past into the Dee, showers of shafts sang around it, but all these profited the king nothing whatsoever. Months after his gay banners, ensigns, and pennons had floated and flashed in the summer air from the ridge of Carlingwark, the great standard of the

overlord of Galloway, blue with its crowned white lion, and the famous flag of the great family itself, adorned with the three silver stars and the red heart of glorious memory, flapped defiance from battlemented Thrieve.

Even now all might be well for the Douglas. The castle could stand a siege of a year, or even two, and in Scotland, where such sudden and frequent changes in power took place, anything might happen in that time. Then, again, should the English civil war, the strife between the White Rose and the Red, come to an end, the King of England was prepared to aid Douglas if he would become his man. But in the heyday of their power the Douglasses of the Black had borne it with a high hand, and though passionately loved by many of their followers, there were some who had death-feuds against them for deepest injuries.

King James stood one morning at the opening of his tent and stared across the meadows of Dee at the defiant tower of the Douglasses, mirrored in the swift-flowing river. The siege had spread itself into a long line curving around the ridge of Carlingwark to Balmaghie on the north, and to the mains or farm lands of Kelton on the south, through which ran the old military road whereby the royal army had approached the fortress. The usual useless bombardment was taking place. Suddenly the answer came in a rattling fusil fire from the





Douglas men behind the island wall, so fierce and deadly that James smote his thigh in rage, and George of Angus shouted to the gunners—those that were left—to draw back from the bank of the river.

As usual, the day's attack failed utterly, and ended only with severe loss to the king's troops. And that night King James sat alone in his tent with gloomy brow, musing, meditating as to whether or no he should attempt the desperate, well-nigh hopeless method of storming the castle.

Late he sat, very late. At the dead hour of night he heard the crossing of the steel partisans, a kind of axe-spear, of the sentries without. A man-at-arms appeared and stood at the salute. He brought the news that a man was without desiring speech with the king. James gave order that he should be admitted, and in another moment he stood in the entrance.

And such a man! Huge as a giant, with mighty girth, and shoulders so vast that James, who had risen in amazement, showed like a boy beside him, he stood there, known to all the countryside, old M'Kim, well called "the Brawny," for generations armourer-smith to the Douglasses of Thrieve.

His cottage and smithy stood on the ridge above the lake of Carlingwark, and almost beneath the shade of three very old thorn trees, landmarks

for ages, the famous Three Thorns of Carlingwark.

James knew the armourer's abode well. It was, indeed, fairly enclosed within his line of war.

Brawny M'Kim had a death-feud with James, Earl of Douglas, and he now offered, with the aid of his seven strong sons, to forge such a bombard as had never then been seen in battle before, if King James would provide enough iron for the purpose.

The burghers of the town of Kirkcudbright found much iron, great balls of stone were quarried from the Bennan Hill, and in due time that monstrous cannon which now stands on the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle was fashioned. Brawny M'Kim named it Mollance Meg, from the estate of Mollance which had been granted to him, either by his masters, the Black Douglasses, or by the king; and Meg, short for Barbara, his loud-tongued wife.

The king's men dragged it to the summit of a hill now called the Byne of Camp Douglas, to the north of Thrieve. The first ball struck above a window slot, and made a terrible gash in the wall of the keep. The second discharge was as destructive as the first, and the garrison ran up a flag of truce.

Margaret Douglas, the Fair Maid of Galloway, surrendered at last her strong castle and pretty

person to the king. She was sorry for "that ungodly and wicked marriage," and besought the king to free her from it. James was not without chivalry in his character: he pardoned the lovely girl, gave her the lordship of Balvany, which had belonged to John Douglas, her cousin, and married her to John Stewart, Earl of Athol, his own half-brother. Fair Margaret had two daughters by this marriage, the eldest of whom was married to the Earl of Errol. So that we have some ground for hope that the "Maid of Galloway" found happiness at last. She was only twenty-eight years of age at the time of this her third marriage. And, like the fragrance of Maytime, the memory of Margaret Douglas lives yet, of her who was as fair, as frail, and as ill-fated as was Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots, herself.

James, ninth Earl of Douglas, was yet upon his feet, and still a foe to be feared.

In 1460 King James the Second laid siege to Roxburgh Castle, the only Scottish fortress then in English hands. As he stood by to mark the effect of a great cannon like that which had wrought such havoc at Thrieve, it burst, and the wedges flying out struck him down, and the Earl of Angus with him. The king died instantly, smitten swiftly and suddenly, even as he had himself, eight years before, struck down a far greater man.

After the rout of the Lancastrian party at the battle of Towton, King Edward the Fourth, head of the house of York, succeeded to the throne of England. The exiled Earl Douglas soon became a great favourite with him, and so remained, save for a few months, from April to July 1462, when there was talk of a marriage between King Edward and Marie de Gueldres, widow of James the Second. During this time the king ordered Earl Douglas to leave Carlisle, and we next hear of him "as a sorrowful and a sore-rebuked man lieth in the abbey of St. Albans, and by the said appointment (that is, the proposed marriage) shall not be reputed nor taken but as an Englishman, and if he come in the danger of Scots, they to slay him."*

The proposed marriage never took place, for Bishop Kennedy was too staunch a Lancastrian, and by autumn Douglas was again in favour. He now advanced upon the Border to judge if it were in a state favourable for an English invasion. But John Douglas, his brother, was captured in Eskdale, and he himself had to retire over the Border with the king's men in full pursuit.

Nevertheless, he was so useful to King Edward when trouble arose with Scotland that, besides the annuity of £500 King Henry the Sixth had allowed him for having made nominal surrender of Thrieve to England, the Yorkist king made him many

* Paston Letters II., page 111.

valuable presents, and named him Keeper of Carrickfergus Castle in Ulster.

He was a great favourite at the English court, this gay reckless knight, Lord James, valiant as a lion in the front of battle, weak as water where a strong will was wanted, in whose person, and under whose rule, the greatest baronial house the world has ever seen came to utter wreck and ruin.

In 1461 or 1462 King Edward conferred on this last chief of the great race that most honourable of distinguished orders the Blue Garter of King Edward the Third. "He was made Knight of the noble Order of the Garter by King Edward the Fourth, and is placed first in order of all the earls, and next to him the Earl of Arundel (who is the first earl of England), in the book entitled 'Nobilitas Politica;' and the English heralds say of him that he was a very valiant, noble gentleman, well beloved of the king and nobility, and very useful to King Edward in all his troubles."*

After this Earl James accompanied King Edward on his campaign against France. Douglas had a following of four men-at-arms and forty archers provided by the English state.

Again, in 1484, the earl, now an old man, rode once more with the Duke of Albany to see if, by the spell of the ancient name, he could rally to his standard his former vassals. They chose

* Hume of Godscroft.

the day of St. Magdalen, the day of the annual fair of Lochmaben, that sweet town girdled with its five gleaming lochs—"Marjory o' the mony lochs," as Robert Burns has called it. Douglas and Albany vowed that they would present their offering to St. Magdalen on the high altar of Lochmaben, that 24th of July.

They left a body of English foot, under a captain named Musgrave, at Burneswark Hill, to aid them in case of need. A place of ill omen, indeed, this hill Burneswark, for one of the Black Douglas name. It overlooks the water meadows of Esk and the fateful field of Arkinholm! Then Douglas and Albany rode into Lochmaben town.

But the crowd only stared at the English, for nigh thirty years had passed since the breaking of the Douglas power. And worse—the alarm had been given, "the fray was raised" through Galloway, Liddesdale, and Annandale—the warden was nigh at the head of the Border levies. The English foot on Burneswark fled at once, but from noon till twilight the cavalry under the earls kept the field, laying on manfully. At last the Scots proved victorious. Albany escaped, but the old Earl Douglas was struck from his horse. There was a hundred merk land offered for his head; among the fierce faces around, one at least he knew, that of Alexander Kirkpatrick, son of the Laird of

Closeburn, a man who had been his own servant in better days.

James called to him.

"Kirkpatrick," he said, "I have fought long enough against my fortune; and since I must die, I would rather that thou—who hast been mine own servant, and whom I knew to be faithful to me as long as I did anything that was likely for myself—should have the benefit thereby than any other. Wherefore take me and deliver me to the king according to his proclamation.

"But see thou art sure he keeps his word before thou deliver me," added James, with remembrances, no doubt, of Stewarts of past days.

But in his heart young Kirkpatrick loved his former chief, and, weeping to see the downfall of a man once so great, offered to go with him into England. James refused, for he was weary of such endless troubles; only, let Kirkpatrick ask the king to spare his life, and at least make sure of his own reward.

The young man brought his former lord to a humble cottage and kept him there some few days. Then the king granted his life and bestowed on Kirkpatrick the lands of Kirkmichael.

When James Douglas was brought into the king's presence, he was sentenced to a life of retirement in the abbey of Lindores. His comment is characteristic of the man.

“He that may no better be must be a monk,” quoth James Douglas.

He never left Lindores Abbey. Yet twice again was he given the chance of making a bold bid for the good things of this world. When once more the country was plunged into dreary civil war, a weaker Stewart, this very James the Third, finding his masters in the Red Douglasses, sought out this last of the once great Black house, and begged him to be his lieutenant against the rebels.

“Sir,” answered Douglas, “you have kept me and your black coffer in Stirling too long; neither of us can do you any good. I, because my friends have forsaken me, and my followers and dependants are fallen from me, betake themselves to other masters; and your black trunk* is far from you, and your enemies are between you and it—which moneys, sir, if you had put out at the first, the people would have taken it; and if you had employed me in due time, I might have done you service. But now there is none that will take notice of me, nor meddle with your money.”

And to the nobles who, under Archibald Bell-the-Cat, fifth Earl of Angus, sent to him, “a shorn monk in Lindores Abbey,” desiring him “to cast off his cowl and come out of his cell, and join with them to suppress so wicked and insolent a king,

* Containing his treasure.

and they would again restore him to all his former dignities and revenues," he replied urging them "to peace and concord; but on no terms would (he) any more try his own hard fortune."

Those fortunes of the great house, their vast estates, were distributed by the Stewarts among the lesser families which had aided in the overthrow of the Black Douglas. George Douglas, fourth Earl of Angus, of course, received the lion's share, the original lands of his forefathers in Douglasdale. Scotts, Johnstones, Maxwells, all grew great on the spoil of the mighty enemy.

The chequered career and stormy life of James, ninth Earl of Douglas, came to a close in 1488 in Lindores Abbey. With him died the grand old title *Earl* of Douglas, and it has never since been revived. Earl James was the first Scots Knight of the Garter, and his stall plate is still in existence.

But the line of Douglas, carried adown the tide of ages by the Douglasses of Angus, of Dalkeith, of Cavers, Drumlanrig, and Queensberry, is with us still. His Grace Lord Alfred Douglas-Hamilton, thirteenth Duke of Hamilton, Marquess of Douglas, is the heir-male; and in the female line, Lord Charles Alexander Douglas-Home, twelfth Earl of Home, Baron Douglas of Douglas, and Lord of Douglasdale.

Not alone in Scotland, their home, but abroad in Italy, where they are represented by the Scoti of

Piacenza ; in Sweden, where there is—or at any rate was in 1789—a branch of the Douglasses of Whittinghame, brave soldiers, one of whom was taken prisoner at Pultava in 1709, fighting gallantly for the cause of Charles the Twelfth, King of Sweden ; and in countless other realms and regions of the earth have sons of this lofty race done honour to their native land.

In warfare and in statecraft no house has furnished so many individual great men as this more than kingly race.

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